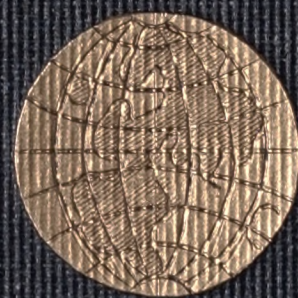
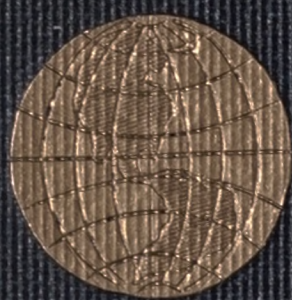
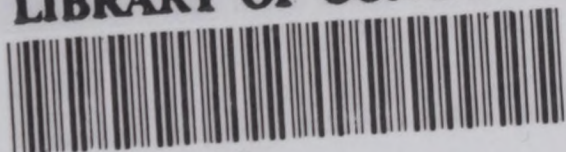


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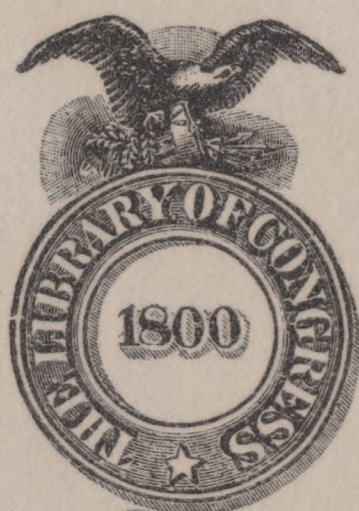


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DEDICATION

This book is affectionately dedicated to the memory
of my son
ARTHUR

IN THIS WORLD OF OURS

CHAPTER I.

THE PROPOSAL.

"Did you ever see such perversity? Just think of the advantages Esther has over other girls!" exclaimed Mrs. Pemberton, "brains, money, beauty and a thousand other attributes that go to make a girl popular. Yet with all this, she absolutely refuses to even consider the Duke's proposal. Think of the prestige it would give us, to have our only child Duchess of Pembroke."

"Yes," replied Mr. Pemberton, "what are our millions for unless to obtain our highest ambition? Bah! it makes me tired to be baffled by a chit of a girl."

"Suppose you insist on her obeying you; use coercion, anything to make her marry the Duke," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Well, I'll try it again, but she meets all my arguments with the same firm stand, and declares she will marry a man, not a puppet, and that man must be an American. Send her to me," concluded Mr. Pemberton, as his wife was leaving the room. "Maybe I can influence her to change her mind."

Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton, with all their millions, were not yet quite satisfied; everything so far that they wished for was theirs. Now the climax to all their ambition had come. The Duke of Pembroke, with vast estates in England, together with their incumbrances, had been laid at the feet of their daughter Esther, but she contemptuously refused them, to the anger and consternation of her parents. To

them it was unexplainable how any girl could treat such a proposal so lightly. They had used every argument known to them to induce her to change her mind, but so far she was as adamant. Mr. Pemberton was deep in thought when she entered the room.

"Come here, child," he said as he looked up, "I want to talk with you."

She advanced to his chair, sat on the arm, put her arms around his neck, and gave him a hearty kiss.

"Now, father, what's this talk about? Mother said it was serious."

"It is, Esther. Your mother and I think it is for your best interest that you accept the Duke."

"Now, father, let us close this incident forever. I will never marry a foreigner—never! never! never!" she said with increasing emphasis.

"No more nonsense!" her father answered. "You must marry the Duke."

"Why?" answered Esther.

"Well," said Mr. Pemberton, "the honor alone ought to be enough for you. He is of an old and honorable family; you could hold a high position in society, and it would be a source of pride and joy to your mother and me to be able to talk about our daughter, 'the Duchess.'"

"Then I and my happiness would be a secondary consideration? I suppose it would matter nothing to you if the coronet and jewels covered a broken heart. No; I will not marry the Duke, nor any other foreigner—no one but an honest American."

"I would like to know where you acquired all this rubbish you are uttering," said Mr. Pemberton testily.

"Well," replied Esther, "the Duke himself is the personification of snobbery; then his debts amount to two millions, which you generously offer to pay. The man I marry must pay his own debts, or, better still, never acquire any. I would rather a thousand times be stood on a block and auctioned off as a slave to the highest bidder, then I would know I was being bought for myself, and not as an ac-

cessory to a debt. Oh, father! Have you no affection for me, that you are willing to sell me for a title?"

"Leave the room instantly!" angrily commanded the now irate Mr. Pemberton.

Poor Esther hurried to her room, threw herself on the bed and burst into a torrent of tears. "Oh, why," she cried, "was I not born of humble parents, whose hearts were warm with affection, and sordid desires had no place in them!"

Exhausted with weeping, she mercifully dropped into a sound slumber.

Mrs. Pemberton was waiting in the library until the interview was ended. As soon as she saw Esther ascend the stairs she crossed the hall and entered the room where she found Mr. Pemberton walking up and down, muttering to himself.

"Well, Stanley," she said, "did she yield?"

"Yield nothing. I could not do a thing with her. If she were like any other girl, I could stop her allowance, and when she had to give up her chocolate creams and soda drinks she would succumb, but she cares nothing for such things, even the every-day extravagances of dress are no temptation to her. I hate to allow any daughter of mine to thwart my plans."

"Yes, Stanley," rejoined Mrs. Pemberton, "I have used every lever I know of to induce her to submit to our wishes, but it only makes her firmer than ever."

"Why, bless me!" said Mr. Pemberton, looking at his watch, "the Duke will be here in five minutes for his answer. He was so confident and so was I of her giving in that I had the papers all ready to be signed so that his debts could be paid before the engagement was announced."

In the midst of their conversation the Duke was announced. He was very profuse in his greeting, but changed completely when he heard that Esther absolutely refused to be a party to the bargain. "Deuced awkward!" he protested. "I looked on it as good as settled. Strange how you American parents have no control over your daughters!"

If she was mine, by Gawd! she would obey me!" he exclaimed vehemently.

Mr. Pemberton looked crestfallen. He had given the Duke every encouragement, so hopeful was he of his daughter being won by the dazzling title of Duchess.

"Could I see your daughter and learn from her own lips that she refuses my offer?"

"You can, if she will grant you an interview," said Mr. Pemberton. "I will send word to her."

In a few minutes Esther responded to her father's summons. As she entered the room the Duke advanced to meet her.

"Remain where you are!" she said, with a wave of her hand, as he attempted to draw a chair beside her. "If your Grace has anything to say, please be brief. I have an engagement for this afternoon."

The Duke rather resented her dignified manner, but, after a little hesitation, he begged of her to reconsider her refusal of him.

Esther drew herself up and said: "As I have so little time at my disposal I will come to the point at once: You evidently think you are honoring me with your offer of marriage. I look on it as an insult."

The Duke flared up instantly: "Why, in England any girl I saw fit to bestow my name upon would rejoice to think that one of the oldest families so honored her."

"That may be so," said Esther, "but under our glorious banner, where all men are equal it counts for nothing. The man I marry must have a pure heart to offer me, not a remnant that has been on the market for years, seeing where it could command the highest price. He must be a man above reproach, one I could love, honor, and respect. Do you come up to such a standard? No, you do not! You are far removed from my ideal of a man. In my estimation you are contemptible. The idea of a creature like you daring to think that I, who have always lived a pure life, would sell myself for your paltry title and barren acres. You have a far better opinion of yourself than

I have of you." So saying, she gave him a scornful look that spoke volumes.

"Why!" stammered the Duke, "I never had any one talk that way to me before. Bah Jove! I never did. You are every inch a Duchess. Oh, say! Cawn't you change your mind? You're just stunning!"

"If you have nothing else to say you can consider the interview at an end, as far as I am concerned," she retorted.

He fumbled with his watch chain, undecided what to do, but Esther settled it by ringing for the servant to show him out. He hardly realized how he left the room until he found himself outside on the walk.

"This puts me in a 'deuced fix,'" he remarked to himself. "I really don't know where to go next. I suppose I'll have to try some one else; but she was just what I wanted, money and all, and no vulgarity to take with her, either."

To the Duke marriage was simply a business proposition. His friends had no trouble in coming across the ocean and exchanging their effete titles for the new millions; why should he not succeed? Arriving at his hotel he called for brandy and soda to brace himself up. The shock of such a decided and peremptory refusal was more than he could bear without a "bracer," as he called it.

Esther reached her room and, while she was arranging her toilet for the afternoon visit, her mother timidly knocked at the door and inquired if she were ready. Both father and mother stood a little in awe of her. She had shown more spirit in the last twenty-four hours than they ever thought her capable of. Secretly they admired her for it, but outwardly they showed their displeasure toward her. Their disappointment was bitter. Their hearts were set on a brilliant marriage for her, and the Duke was just the one to fulfil their ambition. The Duke, during his brief stay in the city, had lived a life of continual dissipation, much to the disgust of his countrymen, who hardly recognized him, so mortified were they that one of their nationality should disgrace them so. At first they extended the hospitality of their homes to him, but as

many of them had daughters to whom he paid his unwelcome attentions, they were obliged to drop him. This nettled him, and he plunged worse than ever (if such a thing were possible) into dissipation and reckless living.

He tried to gain admittance to the American homes. This he succeeded in to a certain extent, and in some way met Mr. Pemberton, who invited him to his home. He immediately fell in love with Esther, or her prospects, which were the same to him. Her disgust for him knew no bounds; the maudlin condition he was in most of the time repelled her; she loathed him and was afraid of even his touch. Her father was taken with his title, and would have forced Esther into a marriage with him if she had not shown her superior will power. However, as Esther had effectually settled it, the matter was dropped for good.

Esther gradually resumed her old place in her father's and mother's affections, no more allusion being made to their disappointment. Still, she felt there was and always would be a difference in her own feelings toward them. Try as she would to dismiss it, the idea would thrust itself forward once in a while like a cloud on her life, that if she had not taken the stand she did they would have blighted her life to satisfy their own ambitions. However, peace was now restored and she felt like her old happy self again, comfortable in the thought that they would not try very soon again to force her into any distasteful marriage and more than ever determined to choose her own husband no matter what came.

CHAPTER II.

THE BALL.

A round of gaiety kept the family in a whirl for the next few weeks. Mrs. Pemberton's annual ball was at hand, and great was the scheming of the ragged-edged set

and their followers to get invitations to it. Esther would have liked to issue the invitations herself, but her mother would not permit anything but an occasional suggestion from her, so she looked passively on and concluded to enjoy it in her own way.

The night of the ball eventually arrived. The house presented a brilliant appearance; everything that money and taste could perform had been done to change the ball-room into a fairy land. Esther enjoyed every minute; her beauty, youth and bubbling spirits made her a general favorite.

Even young "Cholly" Anderson, who usually was so awfully bored, succumbed to her charms, and entertained her with the latest sensation. His chum, the president of the "All Fools Club," having invented a new chafing dish recipe, which accomplishment was hailed with delight by his friends, as it was the only thing he was ever known to do.

Toward the close of the evening Esther noticed a stranger in evening dress standing near a pillar watching the dancers. She went immediately in search of her father to know who he was, and how he came to be there without her knowledge. She knew he must be an invited guest, as it was impossible for any one to pass her mother's scrutinizing gaze and not be detected. She found her father, and taking his arm led him to the stranger.

Her father rushed forward, grasped his hand, exclaiming, "Why, Tom, forgive me, I did not know you were here!"

"Well, I only just arrived and, as I knew no one, thought I would amuse myself watching the dancers."

"Esther, you just take charge of Tom. I see your mother beckoning to me."

Left alone with Tom, Esther burst into a hearty laugh, saying, "Well, Mr. Tom, you and father seem to be pretty well acquainted, but I never saw you, to my knowledge, before."

"No, Miss Esther; but I am not such a stranger as you think. I have been here several times when you were at school, and once when you were abroad."

"You're not Tom Seymour, are you?" exclaimed Esther.

"Yes; that's who I am."

"Why, I thought he was only a boy."

"Well, boys grow up some time. I am twenty-four years old. Think of that!"

"Father never said you were coming. I thought you were at Yale."

"So I am, when I am at home; this was to be a surprise for you; but it seems I was the one that got surprised. There is only one more dance, Miss Esther. Let us have that. I have not had one."

"That sounds terribly inhospitable, doesn't it, on our part?" said Esther.

The musicians started a waltz, and Tom and Esther glided off together like two old friends, laughing like two children over their strange meeting. Tom Seymour was a son of a college friend of her father's and a general favorite in her father's family.

After the dance was over, Tom was borne off by her father to meet Mrs. Pemberton, who invited him to spend his week's vacation with them. Next morning his luggage arrived from the hotel, and before the day was out he was on the best of terms with every one. His fine, manly, straightforward way attracted Esther at once, and the week proved only too short for these young people, whose lives were as yet an unopened book. They plunged into every pleasure and game with a vim; rode, danced and talked with all the abandonment of youth. It was all over too soon. Tom hurried back to Yale, and Esther fell into the old social routine again. They missed one another very much, but as her father said, "These things all go to make up life, and the sooner forgotten the better."

Esther could not forget the visit so easily. In Tom she saw her ideal of what a man ought to be. To her he was a clean-cut, brainy fellow, whose ideas ran farther up the scale than those of the average society man, whose greatest ambition was to tool a coach up the avenue, or, greater still, to have a new salad called after him.

Tom returned to Yale in a happy frame of mind; his

week's visit with Esther was such an enjoyable one; her wholesomeness, light-heartedness and intelligence quite captivated him. In the social circle in which he moved at home the girls all seemed blasé; it wearied them to dance or talk. Reading seemed to most of them an unknown quantity. They absorbed their knowledge principally from a paid lecturer, employed by their favorite club. But here was a girl, young and attractive, that read and thought for herself, and had the temerity to express her opinions, whether they coincided with her friends or not.

— CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT TO FINNIGAN'S LANE.

Mrs. Pemberton was busy dressing for a card party when Esther came hastily into the room. "Mother," she said excitedly, "Mamie says her aunt's boy got run over by the car. I think some of us ought to go and see if we can help them. You know Maggie worked for us so long."

"Yes, Maggie was a good girl. Couldn't you find out where she lives, Esther, and see if she needs anything?" I can't possibly go myself. I must not disappoint Mrs. Burton; besides, she always has such good prizes and such artistic score cards."

"Well," said Esther, "I'll run down to the kitchen and get her address."

"Mamie," Esther remarked as she entered the kitchen, "I want you to give me your aunt's address. I am going to see Jamie."

"Oh, miss, he wasn't hurt so bad hisself, only his clothes."

"Well, I'll go, anyway. She's Mrs. Maggie—— What's her name?"

"She don't be called that way," indignantly answered Mamie. "Her address is Mrs. James Joseph Mulligan, Finnigan's Lane."

"Thank you, Mamie. I'll have no trouble finding her."

Esther started off in high glee. She always liked Maggie, but never had visited her before. Maggie made her periodical visits to the avenue and always went away with full hands, but now Esther was going to visit her in her own home.

Armed with Maggie's address she walked gaily down the Avenue, and took the first car, but after riding several blocks and noticing that the houses grew more and more pretentious, she knew she was not going in the right direction. Maggie's husband was a hod-carrier, and would hardly be able to support much style. At length she motioned to the conductor.

"Finnigan's Lane? Sure I never heard of it. Did you, Jim? Oh, yes; that's on the East Side."

So at the next crossing she transferred to the East Side car.

After endless changing of cars she eventually came to Finnigan's Lane. She looked at the address hopelessly; there was no number to guide her. She walked until she was tired. At length, seeing a policeman she ventured to ask him.

"Mulligan, is it? Sure, of coorse I know Mulligan. 'Mrs. James Joseph Mulligan,' " he read off. "If it's Mag Mulligan ye want, I can set you forninst her door in a jiffy."

While they were talking a little girl came along, carrying a jug of molasses. "See here, Katie, take this lady to Mrs. Mulligan's."

Thanking the policeman, Esther followed the little girl to the house. She knocked, but no one answered. A head appeared at one of the windows.

"They're on the lawn, ma'am," a voice said. Soon every window had its occupant. Mrs. Mulligan, hearing the commotion, came to the door.

"Sure, it's Miss Esther! How did ye ever find me? Come right in."

She took her through the house and on to the lawn.

The "lawn" (by courtesy) was a triangular piece of

ground, where the neighbors emptied their washtubs, thereby keeping it green. The etiquette of the Lane forbid its use before Wednesday of each week; then it was dry enough to be enjoyed. This afternoon Mrs. Mulligan, Mrs. Israel and Mrs. Burgomeister were in possession. Mrs. Mulligan brought out a box and put a pillow off the bed on it for Esther to sit on. Chairs were not considered a necessity in Finnigan's Lane.

Esther was introduced by turns to Mrs. Israel and Mrs. Burgomeister, both bowing low at the honor.

"How do the folks be, Miss Esther," inquired Mrs. Mulligan.

"Splendid; but Mamie told us Jamie was run over by the car."

"Oh, that don't amount to much. Of coorse his clothes got mussed up and a piece of his ear is off; but not enough to disfigure him."

"I suppose you have kind neighbors here, Maggie?"

"Kind, is it? Sure, ye ought to know them. There's Mrs. Israel there, didn't she loan me Ikey's white nightshirt to lay Jamie out in for the doctor's visit! Sure, I never saw a purtier sight than Jamie's red curls layin' agin Ikey's white nightshirt! There's Mrs. Burgomeister, too. Whin the doctor ordered light diet till the fever wint down, didn't she be after bringing me some fine sauerkraut for him."

"Ach, Mrs. Mulligan, you was goot yourself. You was kind to loan me your washtub once alreatty," piped Mrs. Burgomeister.

"She was goot to me, too," said Mrs. Israel. "She take my sewing home two times when my Ikey was sick, and she did give me a piece of soap to wash him mit, too. Ach, she was goot alreatty."

Mrs. Mulligan invited Esther into the house to see Jamie. They walked laboriously up the narrow stairs to the room where Jamie was "laid out," as his mother put it. Jamie enjoyed the notoriety his accident had caused. He blushed as Esther took her seat beside his bed and answered her inquiries in monosyllables. Gradually he over-

came his bashfulness, and gave her a graphic account of how he was "drug" pretty near under the car, and how the crowd "follored" the policeman to their house, and how his mother cried until her apron was wringing wet, and how the people peeked in the window; how none of the kids seen the piece what was hanging from his ear cut off but Mike Doolan. He sneaked in and the cop never caught him. He made the other folks get out, but Mike he crawled under the bed and come out when the cop was gone, and seen it all.

Jamie stopped to catch his breath, and looked out of the corner of his eye, to see how it impressed her. She caught the glance and said, "Why, Jamie, you are quite a hero."

Jamie did not know what a hero was, but knew it was something out of the ordinary by the way Esther said it.

"How did it happen?" she inquired.

"It was this way, Miss. A gent hollered for me to fetch him a paper, and that Burns kid seen him first and run. Then the other kids told me, and I run, and the car just hit me an throwed me down. Wait till I get out and see if I don't knock the stuffin' out of that kid!"

"Why, Jamie, you mustn't talk like that! That's not nice!"

"Why ain't it nice?"

"Because people generally forgive those things. I know he must have been sorry."

"No; he wasn't, Miss, cos he said to the other kids, 'I'm glad Smarty got beat for once.'"

"I suppose, Jamie, you like good things to eat? Tell me what you like best."

He thought a while and said: "Ice cream, pumpkin pie, cheese, cookies, bananas, chewing gum, nuts, candy——"

"Wait a minute, Jamie; I can't remember all that. I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll give your mother the money to buy them."

"Oh, don't do that, Miss. Her and them other women will eat 'em all up."

"You have not much confidence in your mother, have you, Jamie?"

"I know her and you don't. See?" said Jamie, with a knowing wink. "You go, Miss, and buy 'em yourself."

"I don't know where the stores are, Jamie."

"Don't you?" he said, incredulously. "Well, you ast Mrs. Burgomeister; her mother keeps a dandy bakery, twisters and everything; but she don't give no trust."

"What's 'trust,' Jamie?"

"Well, Miss, you have to put up the dough, or you don't get none of her twisters."

"What is dough?" said Esther, still puzzled.

Jamie looked at her curiously. "You're a funny lady as don't know what dough is. It's money," said Jamie triumphantly.

Esther went down the steep, narrow stairs, glad to be in the fresh air again. She took her seat on the lawn and inquired how far it was to the bakery. Mrs. Burgomeister offered to go, and have the things sent up in the bakery wagon. Esther wrote a list, handing it to Mrs. Burgomeister, whose practised eye ran over the items.

"Oh, lady, this will cost so much moneys."

"Never mind," said Esther, "how much will it take?"

"Seven dollars and thirty-five cents," said Mrs. Burgomeister, who never heard of such extravagance.

Esther handed her a ten-dollar bill, telling her to spend it all. "Then there will be enough for everybody."

Mrs. Burgomeister looked at Mrs. Mulligan. The latter said: "Go wan, they do be having stacks of money." Reassured, Mrs. Burgomeister went off rejoicing that her mother was going to get so much money all in one day, too.

Soon Mrs. Burgomeister came back, riding on the bakery wagon, the advent of which was excitement enough. It was never known to deliver goods in Finnigan's Lane; but when the ice-cream freezer was carried into the house the neighbors were awe-struck. What could Mrs. Mulligan be doing? And as basket after basket of inviting-looking goodies followed it, the excitement rose. Ice cream was an unknown luxury to most of them. The

women, who had been standing at their doors, stepped out into the street to get a better view.

Mr. Mulligan, coming home from work, saw the crowd, and felt sure that Jamie had taken a turn for the worst, but when he found out the cause he called them all in, and such a feast as they had was never before known in Finnigan's Lane. Jamie's eyes almost bulged out of their sockets when his share was brought to him.

"Ain't she a peach?" was all he had time to express. His ear might be minus a piece, but his stomach was still in full working order. It was late when Esther left Finnigan's Lane, and Mr. Mulligan was detailed to see her to the car. She found her way home without any difficulty, and well pleased with her visit, having won their gratitude and esteem by her wonderful generosity.

CHAPTER IV.

BRIDGE.

Next morning on looking over the mail Esther found a paper addressed to her in a strange hand. She opened it eagerly. It contained an account of the track meet at Yale. She knew it was from Tom, and looked it over several times in the vain endeavor to find some message from him.

She carried it off to her room to read more carefully, and saw he had won in several events. She was pleased to think he had not forgotten her. On showing it to her father he remarked, "The Seymours were always great on sports."

Tom's father was the best runner in his time, and no one could touch him when it came to vaulting the pole.

"Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, "don't forget this afternoon is Mrs. Gamble's bridge party."

"I am glad you reminded me, mother. I was going to the Rectory."

"What for, may I ask?"

"Well, there is a needy woman that the rector ran across

accidentally, and some one must attend to her. No one else seems to have time."

"I can go there this afternoon as well as not."

"I promised to be there at half-past five o'clock."

After lunch Mrs. Pemberton and Esther talked some time over various social functions that were soon to come off, especially the "Charity Ball," one of the leading events of the season.

"Your father wishes you to be perfectly gowned for the occasion. You know how particular he is about such things, so to-morrow we must see the modiste."

"Very well," laughed Esther, as she ran off to dress for the bridge party.

They found the carriage waiting for them as they descended the stairs and were soon being driven at a rapid rate toward Mrs. Gamble's. When they entered the room, the ladies were all excitement and eager to begin playing. After seating themselves at the tables, the play began in earnest. Things went on at a fever heat for some time. Some piling up winnings, others piling up debts.

Towards five o'clock Esther asked to be excused. The game was over, but every one was excitably counting to see how much they had gained or lost.

"Why, Miss Pemberton, you are not going to leave us?"

"I have an engagement," remarked Esther.

"So have I," said Mrs. Morland. "Why, I should have been at the Combined Charities meeting hours ago; but I don't intend to leave this jolly company to listen to the woes of a parcel of poor women and children."

"Well, you are president, are you not? They can't dispense charity without your signature."

"I know that; but they can wait, can't they?"

Wreathed in smiles, she was soon busy counting up her winnings. Esther, on bidding adieu to her hostess, handed her three dollars, which she had won from her, quietly remarking: "I believe this is yours," just as if she were handing her a handkerchief she had dropped.

"Extraordinary girl that——"

"Well, I am ahead three dollars—almost enough to buy

a pair of gloves," she laughingly remarked as the door closed after Esther.

Mrs. Morland was the last to leave. She hesitated which way to turn, but finally concluded to go to the Combined Charities building. Arriving there she found a member sorting out some cast-off clothing.

"Oh, Mrs. Morland, why didn't you come to the meeting? We did not have a quorum. There was such a distressful case of a sick child, but we could do nothing without your signature. The mother looked as bad as the child.

"Oh, well, let them come again," she replied lightly.

On her way home she met so many friends who had heard of her splendid luck at the card party and congratulated her on her winnings. She reached her home in the best of spirits, but, once inside, some little jar in the household robbed her face of its smiles, leaving it flat and characterless.

CHAPTER V.

VISIT TO COMBINED CHARITIES.

After a weary wait of three hours, a poor woman walked out of the door of the building holding her sick child closely to her breast.

"Oh! if I could only have seen the doctor for a few seconds," she sobbed. "I must find some relief before it is too late."

She walked on and on toward the dilapidated house of two rooms, she called home. Coming to a shaded street, she hesitated. She was tired out, and longed to sit down under the inviting shade and rest; but, seeing some one coming, walked on. As the figure approached, she saw by his garb he was a clergyman. He apparently did not see her, so absorbed was he in some parish problem he was revolving in his mind. But just as he passed her he looked up and caught a glimpse of the sick child. He turned back and stopped a few steps from her. She also turned. Their

eyes met; hers in mute appeal, his in impulsive sympathy. He walked toward her and inquired if the child were ill.

"Oh, yes, sir, very ill. I have been to the Combined Charities for help, but the president was at a card party and after waiting three hours I gave it up."

"You had better come with me to the rectory," he said, as he led the way. "This child needs attention."

As he entered the door his wife looked up in surprise, and was going to say something, but refrained on seeing the poor woman.

"Frances," he said, "this poor friend has a sick child whom, I think, we can help."

She advanced, looked curiously at the child, saying: "Nothing contagious, is it dear?"

"Oh, no; I think not."

"We will phone to the doctor. In the meantime," he whispered, "make her a cup of tea. She appears to be exhausted."

His wife brought the tea, and as soon as the woman drank it she fell off to sleep.

"Just as I thought," exclaimed the rector, "exhaustion."

He quietly slipped the child from her arms and was examining it when the doctor arrived. Giving it a swift glance, the doctor said, "Malnutrition! Same with the mother. They both need nourishment."

In the meantime the rector's wife had found some clean clothes, bathed and dressed the child. While she was doing this, her own little girl came running in. Her mother raised a warning finger, and she tip-toed out again. Going out on to the lawn she put her arms round her dog's neck, and whispered, "Fido, there's a sick baby in the house and you and I have to keep very quiet."

Just then a little girl came and looked in at the gate.

Carolyn came over and said: "You musn't talk out loud, for we have a sick baby in our house."

"Why can't I talk loud, we are a long way from the house."

"Well, you just can't," said Carolyn with a toss of her head. "'Cos people always talk whispery when any one's sick, even if its miles, and miles away."

"You think, Carolyn, a sick baby's a great thing. My father's a doctor and sees lots and lots of sick babies every day. Once," she said, dropping into a whisper, "he cut a woman's leg off—clean off."

"Oh!" said Carolyn, "wasn't he cruel. My father wouldn't do that. He would sew it on. He knows a woman with a sore arm," she whispered triumphantly.

"I don't think my father knows one like that," said the doctor's daughter. "At least, I never heard him say so."

This edifying conversation was brought to an abrupt close by Carolyn being called in to tea.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VISIT TO MRS. MASON.

Esther hurried on toward the rectory. Her one fad was punctuality. She never liked to keep any one waiting. The rector was busily engaged writing when he heard her step. He looked up smilingly.

"Ah, Miss Pemberton, I am glad to see you."

"I thought, Mr. MacGregor, I would come and see about that poor woman and child you phoned about."

"Oh, yes; she is very grateful for the little we did for her, but something permanent must be done. She is not fit to work."

"It's pitiful that in such a bountiful country any one should suffer so."

"However, I find many willing hands to aid me when such cases do come under my observation."

"I am so thankful I happened to meet her. If you will give me her address I will go and see her."

"I would be glad if you would, Miss Pemberton, but I was going to ask you to help me in another matter. As it is getting late now, how would it do if we went together to-morrow morning? I am rather anxious to see the child and mother myself."

Esther readily acquiesced, and after attending to the other business, she wished him good-bye.

Next morning she found the rector waiting for her. They started briskly down the street, discussing various topics of the day. On nearing the house they walked slowly toward the door, but hearing a voice, involuntarily stopped.

Soon the sound of praying reached their ears. They bowed their heads while they listened to her earnest appeal.

"Oh, God," she prayed, "forgive me for denying Thy divinity so long. In my bitterness I cried 'There is no God,' or else I and my child would not starve in the midst of plenty. Yesterday I met a man of God. He called me friend, and raised me out of the depths of despair. Forgive my doubting heart that had forgotten you for so long."

The prayer gradually dropped to a mumur. They, too, prayed for the soul who seemed forgotten.

After remaining some time quietly in thought they knocked at the door. The woman's bright face greeted them, transformed by the new happiness that had crept into her soul.

"Oh, sir, I am so glad to see you," she exclaimed with genuine fervor. "Come in and sit down."

The rector introduced Esther to her, saying: "This young lady has come to be a friend to you."

Before the visit was over Esther had promised Mrs. Mason to take care of her, until such time as she and her child would be strong again.

Next morning she sent groceries and such things as were necessary for their comfort, and also interested some of her friends in their behalf. Mrs. Mason now felt she had something to live for. Only two days before her life was a dreary existence that she would gladly have ended were it not for her child.

CHAPTER VII.

OBJECTION TO THE VISIT.

"Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton next morning, "you must not let every destitute person work on your feelings like this. The world is full of such cases, so don't be imposed upon."

"Oh, mother, this poor woman is different. She is no impostor. Her husband was blown to pieces in a powder mill explosion when her baby was only six weeks old, and, think of it, mother, she had to wash, scrub and sew to keep them both. The company buried her husband, but gave no help to her, although he lost his life in their service."

"Well, you must steel your heart against these things—you are too sympathetic. There are other things for a girl in your position to interest herself in. Your father objects to this slumming business."

"But, mother, this is not slumming. How can I harden myself to sorrow. Why, I could not enjoy my meals if I knew some one was hungry and I could help them and do not."

"Well, Esther, there's a limit to all things, and I wish you would find other ways to spend your time and money."

Esther was too deep in thought to answer this argument. Coming from her mother it bewildered her.

Mr. Pemberton coming into the room inquired what they were discussing.

"Oh, I was just telling Esther what you said about her being imposed upon."

"Yes; that is right. I am glad you brought up the subject." But the object of their remarks had left the room.

"Eva," he said, addressing his wife, "you've got to stop that girl's nonsense. First thing we know, she will be donning a uniform and starting a 'give-us-a-lift' society with brass band accompaniment. That reminds me. Could you spare the time this morning to go with me to Tiffany's to see those pearls? He has just got such a string as I

want. I like pearls on young girls better than any other jewels."

"Well, yes; suppose we go now. I have nothing to do this morning. I am just as anxious as you are to have Esther outdo herself at the Charity Ball. How fortunate for us she is so beautiful. I never could chaperone a dowdy girl."

"Yes, we have been singularly blessed in having such an attractive daughter. But keep in mind what I said about this charity fad of hers. It's got to be quenched." So saying he left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARITY BALL.

The next few weeks were devoted to preparations for the charity ball, one of the great social events of the season. Esther was no prude. Like all healthy, sensible girls, she enjoyed being well dressed, as well as she did being well fed.

She was human enough to enjoy a well-fitting gown, and pleased to know that all the little accessories that go to make up an up-to-date girl's toilet were not lacking.

The evening before the ball her father called her to him and, opening the jewel case, showed her the pearls. She went into ecstasies over their brilliance and purity. He put them lovingly around her neck, and drew off to admire her.

"Oh, father," she exclaimed, "you are too good to me. Just think how few girls have so generous a father," she said, giving him a fond embrace. She drew off to one corner to admire the pearls.

Mr. Pemberton turned to his wife and said in an undertone: "She's all right, if only we can keep her away from this fad of hers."

Next morning Esther rose early and made a hurried visit to Mrs. Mason, and was home before her mother was aware of her absence. At the breakfast table she told of

the visit and the wonderful improvement she found in the mother and child.

Mr. Pemberton gave a significant glance at his wife. He had hoped Esther's interest in this woman had ended, but his wife gave him a knowing look, as if to say, "Leave it to me, I'll end it."

Esther was not the girl to be easily turned from what she thought a duty. This sad case had set her to thinking. Many an hour she spent planning how such things could be attended to without so much red tape.

The day of the ball Mr. Pemberton sent for Esther to come to him.

"Esther," he said, "I want you to look your best to-night. Who knows but what you may make a conquest."

"You seem to be anxious to get rid of me, father."

"There will be many distinguished guests at the ball," continued Mr. Pemberton. "A girl with your expectations ought to have the pick. I am anxious to see you well married. That reminds me, Tom and his friend Atherton are coming to the ball."

"When did you hear that, father?" said Esther, carefully concealing her joy at the news.

"Just a few moments ago. Atherton's father was asking me what kind of a fellow Tom was. I think he has been paying some attention to his daughter, and he incidentally remarked that both boys would be here for the ball."

"Tom and I can't have any fun," thought Esther. "It's a wonder he never mentioned her," meaning Atherton's sister.

"He told me everything he did while at college—what the girls were like and with whom he danced; but I am sure he never mentioned Miss Atherton."

She went slowly upstairs to dress. Her maid had everything in readiness, but looked critically at Esther as she entered the room. "Those cheeks are not as bright as I would like to see them. Poor child's tired out. These rich people do have awfully hard times. What with changing their clothes five times a day, and eating six times a day, to say nothing of the galavanting they do between times, it's no wonder they look so pale and peaked."

She was aroused from her reverie by Esther, who was anxious to have the ordeal of dressing over with.

As the preparations advanced, Esther felt her spirits recovering, and before the final touches were added, she was her old self again, much to the delight of her maid, who was proud of her young charge.

"You look beautiful to-night," she said enthusiastically as Esther was surveying her lithe form in the cheval glass.

"Thank you, Hannah. I believe you are proud of me."

"Of course I am. Indeed, it would be as much as my place is worth to send you away from my hands not looking your best. Mr. Pemberton do be that particular about your looks."

Mr. Pemberton was proud, indeed, when Esther came downstairs. He patted her gently on the cheek, saying:

"You will play havoc with many hearts to-night, if I am not mistaken."

Mrs. Pemberton joined them, and soon they were on their way to the ball. They had some difficulty in approaching the clubhouse, carriages being blocked for a considerable distance; but the skill of the coachman in guiding the horses through the maze brought them gradually to the entrance. On alighting, many favorable comments were passed on Esther by the crowd that always collects outside at such affairs.

She tripped up the steps and was soon in the dressing room, being relieved of her wraps. On entering the ball-room she glanced around to look for Tom; but the crowd was so great it was impossible to distinguish any one at a glance.

Eventually being seated, her admirers flocked around her. Her programme was in demand and rapidly being filled up, much to her dismay. She did want at least one dance with Tom. She kept looking for him among the guests. At this juncture her father approached, bringing with him a short, fat, be-diamonded man, with a black, bristling mustache.

"Esther, my dear, allow me to present you to Count Alphonse De Galle."

She could hardly conceal her disgust, but managed to bow in recognition of the introduction. He immediately asked for her programme, which she grudgingly handed to him. He put his name down for three dances, much to her annoyance. Before he had time to enter into any conversation her partner claimed her for the first dance, the ball being now formally opened.

As she walked off, he watched her, saying to himself: "I must capture her and her millions. I have lost three months in this country and gained nothing."

In the whirl of the dance she forgot his sinister look that made her feel so uncomfortable. Her eyes were still searching for Tom. Soon she was rewarded by seeing him and his friend watching the dancers, but he did not see her.

"He is watching for Miss Atherton," she thought.

The dances followed one another rapidly, and soon the count came to claim his. After the dance he led Esther to a secluded spot among the palms at the end of the ball-room. Once there he began his protestations of love in spite of her remonstrances. At last, in an outburst of feeling, he threw his arms around her, and endeavored to embrace her. She struggled to free herself, and threatened to call for help. Just then some one took him by the collar of his coat and shook him as a terrier would a rat.

"Take your hands off that young lady this instant, you rascally gorilla you!"

Esther turned and met Tom's stern face. She clung to him for protection as he led her to a seat.

"How fortunate for me you came. I was scared to death of him."

"I ought to have killed him," said Tom angrily.

"Please take me to my mother, I feel as if I am going to faint."

"Let us sit here near the door where the air is cool, until you recover from your fright. Then I will find your mother. You look awfully white, Esther. I wish I had my hands on him again," said Tom, now thoroughly aroused.

They both sat several minutes, each too much occupied

with their thoughts to speak. At length Esther asked Tom to take her to her mother.

They wound their way through the dancers and, after finding the mother, entered into a general conversation, neither alluding to the episode, Esther preferring the privacy of her home, and Tom, too much of a gentleman to even mention it, which he never did. Although Esther danced the remainder of the dances, she was longing for the whole thing to be over.

Tom did his best to bring back her spirits, but somehow the ball had lost its zest for her. Her mother noticed it and put it down to the crowded room. Tom received a cordial invitation to visit the Pembertons next day, as it was all the time he could spare. His college course was nearly finished. He had reached a point where every day and hour counted, and was anxious to return as soon as possible. Gradually the dancers thinned out, and the Pembertons made preparations to leave. The carriage was soon at the door. Tom, after carefully helping Esther and her mother in, said good night with the promise of calling next day.

Esther, as soon as she got home, hurried to her room, anxious to be alone. Hannah helped her disrobe, and on carrying her jewels to a place of safety, returned with a cup of hot chocolate.

"Drink this, Miss Esther, you do look that fagged out. Sure, you're too young to be up all night."

Esther took the cup and drank the contents, thanking Hannah, who took the empty cup away. As soon as she was alone the memory of the whole thing flooded over her.

"What on earth would I have done if Tom had not rescued me from that viper! I don't believe I even thanked him; but I will the first opportunity."

It was late next morning when Esther arose. She dressed herself leisurely, and on coming downstairs heard Tom's voice in the library.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM.

"Good morning," said Tom cheerily as she came into the room. "I did not know you were such a late riser. Here I have been a whole hour, waiting to see you."

"I thought I heard some one in here with you," said Esther.

"Your father was here, but he has just gone out, leaving me the financial report to read. I don't find it very amusing, do you? Or have you ever read it?"

"No," answered Esther, "it does not interest me at all to know that some one's fortune was lost and some one else was thereby able to add to his."

They chatted on until luncheon was announced, Esther doing full justice to it, much to Tom's amusement.

"Well," she said as she answered his teasing remarks, "it's the first meal I've had to-day."

After the meal was over Tom and Esther strolled out doors. They enjoyed being together again. He told her what he was doing at college, and other interesting things. It pleased him to have any one take an interest in him. In talking of his work, he mentioned his friend Atherton, who would also finish his course the same time as Tom did. The conversation gradually led up to the ball, which they talked over.

"Tom, I never thanked you for rescuing me from that wretch."

"There was nothing to thank me for; any fellow would have done the same thing."

"But not so thoroughly," answered Esther. "I have not told mother yet. I have not had a chance."

"You were pretty well frightened, Esther; but, after all, no harm was done. He cleared out too quick. He knew when he had enough."

"How did you happen to be there, Tom?"

"Well, Atherton was dancing and I thought I'd stroll into

the anteroom and have a smoke when I heard loud talking, and, on stepping near, I saw, to my astonishment, it was you struggling to free yourself from that cur."

"It makes me shudder to think of it, Tom. Did Miss Atherton come to the ball?"

"No; her mother took ill suddenly—nothing serious; but she would not leave her."

"What kind of a girl is she?" said Esther.

"Splendid," said Tom enthusiastically. "I think Fred Ashton is to be envied."

"Why?" said Esther.

"Because she is going to marry him in spite of her father's objections."

"Why, I thought she was going to marry some one else."

"Whom?" said Tom, on seeing Esther hesitate. "Now tell me whom."

"Well—you!"

"Me? I am not going to think of matrimony until my college work is finished. I have my eye on the dearest and prettiest piece of humanity mortal eye ever gazed on."

"Who is this paragon of excellence," said Esther.

"Oh, I can't tell you; that's my secret," said Tom laughingly. "Some day maybe I'll tell you."

"Tell me now," pleaded Esther. But before Tom could reply her mother called her into the house.

CHAPTER X.

THE COUNT'S CALL.

"Esther, there is a visitor for you in the drawing-room." She walked in, wondering who it could be. But her wonder gave way to amazement when she beheld the count.

He bowed low as Esther entered the room, walked forward, with both hands extended in greeting.

"How dare you come to my home, much less approach me, after your conduct last night!"

"I have your father's gracious permission," he replied unctuously.

"My father's?" she gasped. "Then you can wait and see him. I have no desire for further acquaintance with you."

"Oh, my dear young lady, say not so. I love you, I love you, adored one. Turn not the brilliance of your sparkling eyes from me. I will die as a flower does without the sun, if you turn your radiant self from me. Ah, you are so lovely, sweet one. The fragrance of your presence overpowers me. I know not what to do. My love steals my senses away, I am as a child so helpless, when I come into your charming presence."

Esther listened with disgust to this apology for a man. She thought a few minutes, walked rapidly to the end of the room to a window, beckoned to Tom, who was smoking on the lawn. "Go around to the door, and come in quietly," she whispered.

He hurried round, wondering what she wanted. But one glance into the room satisfied him.

"You here!" he thundered.

"I came," said the count, "at Monsieur Pemberton's invitation."

"But not at mine," said Esther haughtily. "My father is not at home. Perhaps it would be as well to call when he is."

She was brave enough now that Tom was there to protect her.

The count sat some time, but as Tom showed no inclination to vacate the room the count rose to leave.

Giving a glaring look at Tom, he said:

"I will have re-venge for this, monsieur."

"All right," said Tom. "I will meet you any time or place you mention." But no word ever came to him from the count.

The papers a few mornings after announced that Count Alphonse De Galle was suddenly called to France on urgent business, much to the regret of the society ladies to whom he had endeared himself by his charming personality.

Tom laughed uproariously at the item.

"Tastes differ," he commented as he laid the paper down. "I think I helped to make his business a little more urgent than he expected."

Next afternoon Tom reluctantly took his leave of the Pembertons, anxious now to return to college, but very much averse to leaving Esther.

CHAPTER XI.

ESTHER ATTENDS THE HOUSE PARTY.

Esther made an early visit to Mrs. Mason next morning. She wanted to make some provision for her sustenance until she was strong enough to work.

Arriving at her home she found her busily engaged in embroidery. "Why, Mrs. Mason, what beautiful work! I was wondering, as I came along, if there could not be a way arranged where you could work at home and keep your child with you. This settles it. You can embroider."

"But, Miss Pemberton, where can I get work? I am doing this for a friend of the rector's wife."

"I can get you plenty of work. The girls would go into raptures over this waist you are doing."

Mrs. Pemberton waited until Esther returned. As she came to where her mother was, the latter said: "Esther, why will you persist in visiting this woman? You know your father objects to it, and I, myself, can't see, for the life of me, what pleasure there is in going into a stuffy, ill-smelling house."

"Not much pleasure, certainly," said Esther; "but it's a comfort to feel you have been able to help some one not so fortunate as yourself in regards to this world's goods."

"Well, you must give it up. I promised your father I'd see that you did."

"I can't understand father," mused Esther. "He thinks nothing of putting fifteen thousand dollars' worth of pearls around my neck for personal adornment, but for me to

spend five dollars on some unfortunate, worries him to death."

"It's not the money, it's the idea that bothers him. He has such a horror of such things. You can spend what you like, but, for goodness sake, be like other people."

Tom wrote to Esther as soon as he reached the college. She was all excitement over his letter, the first one she had ever received from him. Her father smiled when she told him, and said, "Tom is a first-rate fellow, but a good deal like his father—got peculiar ideas about honesty. He could have rolled up his millions like I did if he was not so squeamish, instead of leaving Tom a paltry fifty thousand."

"You did not make your money dishonestly did you, father? I'd hate to think what I spent was not honestly earned."

"Nonsense, child; of course it was honestly earned, every cent of it. You don't understand financial matters. Better leave those things to me and interest yourself in gew-gaws and finery, like other girls. Come, Esther, let us find your mother. I hardly see her these days, she is so busy with her social duties." So saying, they went to look for her, and found her busily engaged looking over some invitations that had come that morning.

"Esther, here's something that interests you. Mrs. Williams wants you to join a week's end party at her country home. You know how much you enjoyed your last visit there."

"Yes, mother, I'd love to go. When is it?"

"She wishes all the guests to come on Thursday afternoon. Will you accept it, Esther?"

"Of course she will," said Mr. Pemberton. "The Williamses always entertain nice people. What say you, Esther?"

"Oh, I want to go."

"That settles it, then."

Esther accepted the invitation and made preparations for the visit.

The day soon came around. Her father took her to the

train, where she found several more of the guests, who proved a most congenial party. The distance being short, they were soon there, and hustled into waiting carriages.

The hostess met them on their arrival at the broad piazza. After exchanging greetings, they were conducted to their various apartments to prepare for dinner. Assembling at the dinner table later on, they proved to be the merriest kind of guests, fun and wit flowing freely.

After dinner arrangements were made for a moonlight ride. Horses were saddled, habits donned, and to the music of clattering hoofs, the party started off. Esther and her escort entered into it with a zest, both being fine riders and splendidly mounted. They were the cynosure of all eyes.

The trip took them to a lake seven miles distant, where the hostess had friends, who made them all welcome, closing the evening with a dance. They returned home in excellent spirits, pronouncing it the jolliest ride they ever had. The following morning various amusements occupied their time—tennis, driving and so forth.

Esther and Mr. Fairchild, her escort of the previous evening, strolled about the grounds, both being fond of walking, and their tastes in many things inclining the same way. Naturally they enjoyed each other's company. Toward evening private theatricals took up their attention, and it was late that night when they all retired. Saturday an excursion was planned to visit some old Indian mounds, and an al fresco luncheon was enjoyed in the shade of the trees beyond the mounds.

After a late dinner the guests took the train for their homes, every one rejoicing over the good time they had. Esther arrived home in high spirits, both father and mother being overjoyed at her return. Though only a few days gone, they missed her, and were glad to see her back again.

"It's been lonesome without you, Esther," said Mr. Pemberton; "but some day I suppose we will have to give you up."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. FAIRCHILD.

"Did you lose your heart down there, Esther?"

"No, father; my heart's my own yet, but I did meet several very pleasant people, and some one, mother, that knows you. A Mr. Fairchild."

"Why, of course, I know him, or did when he was a boy. He has been abroad so much of late years. In fact, I thought he was still there."

"He has only been home a week, mother."

"Well, that accounts for my not seeing him. Wasn't it his father that made such a neat turn in copper stock and piled up a million or two?" said Mr. Pemberton.

"That's the same one, Stanley; I think, it has doubled several times over since then. Did you ask him to call, Esther," said Mr. Pemberton eagerly.

"I did not need to. He said he was coming to see mother and renew old friendships."

"I tell you he is worth cultivating, Eva. Five or six millions are not to be sneezed at, Eva," he said, turning to his wife. "Make the boy's visit as pleasant as you can."

"Trust me for that, Stanley."

"I believe he would be just as nice without a cent," said Esther. "He seems to have more than the average amount of sense."

"He will need it to take care of his millions," dryly answered Mr. Pemberton.

In a few days Mr. Fairchild called, much to the delight of Mr. Pemberton, who idolized the great commodity vulgarly called money. He was anxious to secure him and his millions for Esther, who had no thought regarding him other than a friend, their friendship being of a most cordial kind, neither one of them ever thinking of anything but the pleasure of each other's society.

But Mr. Pemberton was too much of a man of the world to let it remain so. Talking with Esther one day he said:

"How would you like to marry young Fairchild?"

"Marry him?" answered Esther. "Why he never asked me, father."

"That cuts no figure in these enlightened days."

"I don't love him, and I am sure he does not love me," said Esther.

"That, too, is superfluous. He has money, and good looks. You have the same, and it's the most natural thing in the world that you should both marry."

"Now, father, you and I settled all that when I refused the duke."

"Well, by Jupiter, you won't refuse this time. This case is different!"

"Yes; it is," said Esther. "He has his own money, the duke wanted yours. But that does not alter it. I don't love him, and I don't think he has the slightest intention of asking me to."

"Stuff and nonsense," said Mr. Pemberton angrily. "You seem determined to thwart me. You will marry him, or my name's not Pemberton."

Esther had never seen her father so angry before, and wisely let the subject drop. The object of their remarks became a regular caller, totally unconscious of the discussion he has caused. Esther and Mr. Fairchild were fast becoming friends in spite of her father's plans, which were so repugnant to her. It was just a wholesome friendship between two comrades, whose tastes ran along the same lines, but so far no love had entered into it. Mr. Pemberton watched its progress, well pleased. He could only see one outcome to it.

One day, finding Mr. Pemberton alone, Mr. Fairchild and he fell to talking over different topics. At length, in some way, the subject of home life came up. Mr. Pemberton asked him how it was with such good prospects he had never married.

"I don't know," he answered. "In fact, I never saw a girl that appealed to me until I met your daughter; not that I am in love at all. She is more congenial to me than any other girl I ever met."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Pemberton, "I never was much of a believer in love at first sight. I think a girl's qualities grow on one by degrees."

"Now, I differ there," said Mr. Fairchild. "I always felt that when I met my affinity I would know it at once."

"Well, maybe; but I think you and Esther could not do better than make up your minds to marry."

"That's a thing I never would do. I must love the girl I marry and she must love me."

"Bless me! if you have not got the same antiquated ideas Esther has."

"I am glad she feels that way. I enjoy her friendship so much I would not like it broken."

This conversation was abruptly ended by hearing Esther's voice as she came in with her mother from a shopping tour. Fortunately Esther heard none of this conversation. Her sensitive nature would have been shocked at her father's worldliness. Her ideas and his never coincided on such matters.

Esther and her mother greeted Mr. Fairchild in a friendly manner. Mr. Pemberton excused himself to go and hear the latest news in stocks.

"I don't believe father could exist without the exchange. I never saw such a man," said Esther. "Money's his god."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Pemberton, "your father has other interests besides money."

"Well, mother, I have seen him drop the morning paper and run to the phone as if he was shot out of a cannon just because some stock dropped half a cent."

"Well, my dear, half a cent counts on a large block of stock."

"If I had so much money that it worried me I'd give it away," said Esther.

"Just my notion, too," said Mr. Fairchild. "I can't spend my income, but, thank goodness, I can give it away."

Mrs. Pemberton looked surprised.

"I see that surprises you, Mrs. Pemberton. You would hardly expect a man that apparently put his time in playing golf or tennis in the day time and cards and dancing at night to hold such ideas and views; but I do."

"Mr. Fairchild, it does me good to hear you talk that way," said Esther. "Just because I did a little charity work father was up in arms. He seemed to think I was getting faddish and forbid it."

"Yes; Mr. Pemberton likes a girl to be a girl and not a prude," said Esther's mother.

"You could hardly call your daughter a prude. She enjoys pleasure as much as any girl, I think," remarked Mr. Fairchild. "I really think," he continued, "being the fortunate possessor of money need not harden your heart to the needs of the poor. At least, that's how it strikes me. A person does not need to be a 'boor' because they are kind hearted."

"But," answered Mrs. Pemberton, "think how people would annoy you if they thought they could gain anything by it."

"Why, mother, Mrs. Mason did not annoy me."

"Who is Mrs. Mason, Miss Pemberton?"

"It was a woman the rector accidentally met and helped. I helped her a little, too."

"Why, Esther, I should say it was more than a little. You stocked her house with groceries and made every girl you knew give her an order for an embroidered waist."

"Well, mother, they would have bought them, anyway, and not had nearly such nice work on them. She has never bothered me a particle."

"That's an unusual case, is it not, Mr. Fairchild?"

"I don't think so," he answered. "My charities mainly consist in helping kids that are selling newspapers or blacking shoes. Just one of their broad grins pays me fifty times over. I never saw such grateful little chaps as the average street arab."

"You astonish me, Mr. Fairchild. "My idea of that class was that they had an unlimited supply of impertinence."

"Not the real poor, Mrs. Pemberton. I find them just as thoughtful and kind as any of our class; more so in many instances. They are more willing to share their miserable pittance than we are many times. You seldom appeal to them in vain."

This conversation rather annoyed Mrs. Pemberton. She

was of the worldly world and hated anything that suggested poverty or need of help. As long as she was clothed and fed, it mattered not to her whether any one else was hungry or ragged. Her shallow mind could not grasp such situations, her argument was always, "Why can't they work?"

She never realized that no matter how willing or industrious they might be, there were times when their poverty overwhelmed them. Try as they would, things would go against them. Just as a child may fall, and as it tries to rise, will slip and fall again through no fault of its own.

Esther had long since given up trying to convince her mother what a pleasure it was to lift up and comfort some poor unfortunate that kept stumbling by the wayside in spite of their efforts to keep on their feet. "What would become of such people if we, that have been blessed with riches, did not extend a helping hand?" Esther asked her mother; but she would only answer with a look of disgust.

Mr. Pemberton held much the same views, but policy kept him from expressing them. Then, oftentimes, it suited his purpose to donate handsomely to some charity for which he was sure to be glorified by the papers and praised for his wonderful benevolence.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOM'S RETURN.

The days passed by rapidly. Tom was soon to receive his diploma. Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton, together with Esther, promised to be there to congratulate him. The eventful day arrived and Tom watched eagerly as the visitors thronged into the hall. At last he was startled by a vigorous slap on the back which made him wince; but on turning around and seeing the cause of it, he forgot his discomfiture. For there stood the Pembertons. He was immensely pleased to see them, as outside of his uncle and his family he was entirely alone. He had come to regard the Pembertons in the light of relatives. He escorted them

to seats. The exercises began, but were rather tedious until the distribution of the diplomas.

When that was over Tom received his relatives' good wishes for his career that was just now opening. As soon as was possible, he made his way to the Pembertons, anxious most of all to have Esther's congratulations.

She was in the happiest mood; her good spirits infected Tom. This was a great day in his life and he realized it. He had studied hard and passed the goal he aimed for. So naturally he felt like rejoicing. They both laughed and joked good-naturedly as Esther mimicked the professor's manner as he alluded to Tom's fine record, much to his amusement. The next few days were spent attending the various festivities incidental to college life and the closing days of college.

Esther enjoyed this round of gaiety to the utmost. Her father invited Tom to return with them and rest.

As he had no decided plans, he accepted. His uncle warned him against plunging into too much pleasure as he ought to be thinking over his future prospects.

"I don't intend to live a gay life, uncle," he said laughingly. "I will decide inside of two weeks what my future work will be. Dear old uncle," he said, after he bade him good-bye, "he has such an affection for me. He does not want to see me take one misstep, and he won't, either," mentally registered Tom. And he kept his word, though there were times when it proved a difficult undertaking.

After bidding farewell to his college chums he left with the Pembertons for their home.

Many were the envious eyes cast after Tom as he escorted Esther.

"Well, it beats all, what good fortune some people have, doesn't it?" said one of his chums to the other.

"There's Tom Seymour got most of the honors, and gets invited to visit in the home of the prettiest girl here to-day. That's too much luck to fall on one fellow."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIVALS.

While the Pembertons were gone Mr. Fairchild was lost without them. Their home had become home to him. He was on a more friendly footing with them than he was with any one else. He missed Esther, too, and was glad when he heard they were expected to return that evening.

Next day he called, and met Tom for the first time. They all enjoyed meeting, but Mr. Fairchild soon saw he was supplanted by Tom, and the pleasant times he and Esther had had together were not to be renewed, at least at the present. Tom was everything with everybody.

Mr. Pemberton could not help noticing the effect it had on Mr. Fairchild, and remarked that Tom was a son of an old friend of his. "You will like him, everybody does."

This did not console Mr. Fairchild very much. The boy, as Mr. Pemberton called Tom, was pleasant enough, but his monopoly of Esther was not to his liking at all. Esther noticed this and decided to divide her attention between them. So she invited Mr. Fairchild to join them on their next ride into the country—a recreation she and Tom frequently indulged in.

Tom resented this, and forgot himself so far as to mention it. "Now, Tom," said Esther, "Mr. Fairchild has as much right to ride with me as you have."

"I don't think so; you have only known him a short time."

"That makes no difference," answered Esther. "Mother has known him for years."

"All right, go ahead. I'll stay home."

"No, you won't, Tom," insisted Esther.

It took a great deal of persuasion to get Tom to go, but he could not resist Esther and eventually joined the party.

It was a quiet journey, each man envying the other, and jealously guarding Esther from the other's attention.

On their return home Esther kept revolving in her mind Mr. Fairchild's behaviour. "He acted like as if I were his possession, and no one had a right to come near me," she thought.

Tom had ridden silently by Esther's side most of the way. She missed his good natured banter. After dinner Tom and Esther took a walk and unburdened their minds to each other.

"What ever did you invite him for, Esther?"

"I don't know. Wasn't he horrid?" she said.

"I thought so," answered Tom. "It just spoilt the whole afternoon. I am glad he could not come to your house to-night."

"So am I," said Esther; "it's lots nicer by ourselves."

"Suppose we cut him out of our plans for the future," suggested Tom.

"But what would father and mother say? They think the sun rises and sets in him."

"Suppose they do; what's the matter with their enjoying the landscape?"

"Oh, Tom, you musn't talk like that," laughed Esther.

But, nevertheless, they kept their word, much to Mr. Fairchild's disgust. Her father and mother were beginning to get a little uneasy about Tom.

"It could not be possible he is falling in love with Esther," said Mr. Pemberton. "If he is it's got to be stopped. She must not throw herself away like that. I am sure she could have Mr. Fairchild and his millions by just raising her finger."

The two weeks were nearly up, and Tom was in the library consulting with Mr. Pemberton as to the best way to enter into commercial life, he having accepted Mr. Pemberton's advice to take up banking.

"This," said Mr. Pemberton, "is a commercial age. Professional men, unless of unusual ability, are starving on a mere pittance, while the business man waxes fat."

Tom himself preferred a business life, and, at Mr. Pemberton's suggestion, associated himself with a prominent banking concern. This was the last day of his visit. His

belongings had already arrived and were in his new quarters.

He and Esther determined to spend the last day together and strolled out toward evening for a walk.

"Esther," said Tom, after they had gone some distance, "what makes you so serious?"

"Your going away makes me feel blue, Tom."

"But I will be here just the same."

"Of course you will only see me in the evenings."

"I hope that Fairchild will clear out," said Tom viciously. "He keeps saying he is going to Cuba, but never goes. I wish he would go somewhere," said Tom hotly.

"I am tired of having to entertain him," said Esther. "Lately he has been trying to make love to me, and I know he has father and mother on his side, and that's what bothers me."

"Don't you love him, Esther?"

"Why of course I don't."

"Oh, Esther, if I had only known that before. I have been perfectly miserable. I thought you were growing fond of him."

"Tom, your eyesight must be failing. Can't you see how much I try to avoid him?"

"Do you love anyone else, Esther?" queried Tom.

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because, Esther, I love you—love you with all my heart, and have ever since I first met you. But I did not want to tell you until I had something to offer you, until my future was assured. Now I must tell you; although I did not intend to just yet. Give me a little hope, Esther. Your will shall be my law."

"Oh, Tom, I don't know how to answer you. I do love you better than any thing on earth, but——"

"That's enough to make me the happiest man on earth," said Tom, as he clasped her in his arms in fond embrace.

"Tom, don't squeeze the breath out of me. You did not let me finish. I said 'but'——"

"I never heard it," said Tom.

"Well, I'll say it again—but father and mother will never listen to it."

"How do you know they won't?"

"Because, Tom, father has made an idol of money, and he recognizes money before love."

"Do you, Esther?"

"Of course not; to me, Tom, you are the best and dearest of men."

"That's enough for me," said Tom boyishly.

"Promise me, Esther, that you will wait for me until I can offer you a home worthy of you. It won't be long."

"I promise, Tom."

"I will ask your father's consent."

"But suppose he refuses, then what will you do?"

"I'll do just as Queen Esther says, if she will be true to me. I will be true to her. Love always finds a way out of every difficulty."

After this they gave themselves up to the rapture of their love, these two young hearts, just as lovers always have since the world began.

Mr. Fairchild was perfectly miserable. He realized now that he loved Esther, but felt it was not returned. Since Tom came he missed the old cordial greeting that had always been his. That she avoided him he knew. There was always an excuse whenever he invited her to ride or go to any place of amusement, that once she would accept with pleasure.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEWSBOY.

Mr. Fairchild dwelt on his disappointment, but still did not give up hope. One day, feeling unusually unhappy, he decided to take a walk. Taking up his hat and cane he went down town. It was late in the afternoon, and after walking some time he came to the park and sat down to

watch the passers-by. His attention was attracted to a boy sitting on the bench opposite to him. He had a bundle of newspapers beside him, but was making no effort to sell them. He beckoned to him, and asked him if he had an evening paper. The boy answered by handing him one.

"Why don't you try and sell them," he asked him.

"Well, yer see, mister, I got the train folks, and the other kid's got the cars, and the train aint in yet."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Do you make much money selling papers?"

"Gee, yes; sometimes a dollar a day. And when there's a murder I often gets over two plunks. You know what they are, don't you, mister?"

Mr. Fairchild reached into his pocket and brought forth a silver dollar. "That's one, isn't it?"

"Yes; that the goods all right! How did you earn it?"

"I had it given to me."

"Was it a lady give it to you? Cos I know a lady that's got lots of them. She just bought out a bakery onct, when I got hurt by the car, and give me and every one ice cream too. Did you ever have ice cream, mister?"

"Yes," said Mr. Fairchild.

"It's good stuff, ain't it, mister?"

"Do you like it?"

"Yer bet I do."

"Say, youngster, what's your name? I like to know my friend's names."

"Yer a fine guy. I don't mind telling yer. It's Jamie Mulligan. What's yours, mister?"

"Fred Fairchild," he answered.

"Did you ever sell papers?"

"No. Why?"

"Gee, it's fun. Pretty soon the train will be in, and I'll have to hike."

"Don't you want to come with me and have some ice cream?"

"Do I?" said Jamie. "Just try me."

"Well, let us cross the street. I see a sign over there." They crossed over, and were soon in, and the ice cream

ordered, when Jamie noticed two boys with their noses flattened against the window watching him and his friend.

"Say, look at them kids! They follered us. I know them, mister. I bet they never tasted ice cream."

"Well," said Mr. Fairchild, "we must get them some, too. Tell them to come in, Jamie."

Jamie walked to the door and said, "Youse fellers can come in. Come on now, git a move on yer! He's going to blow in for yez!" They did not need to be told twice, but followed Jamie shamefacedly in.

"Say, mister," whispered Jamie, "hev yer got enough money, it's fifteen a plate here. I know where it's only ten a plate, but it's a long ways off."

"Don't worry, Jamie. I have enough to pay for it."

He regaled them with two dishes each and all the cake they could possibly stow away. After they had eaten all they could, Jamie and the rest walked out.

The two fellers, as Jamie called them, started off, but Jamie took them by their arms and brought them back with a jerk. "Youse is fine fellers. Can't you say thank ye to the gent." This they did before Jamie released his hold on them, and with a parting growl they slunk off.

"Yer musn't mind them kids, mister. They ain't got no mother to teach them manners. I has," said Jamie, with an outburst of pride. Mr. Fairchild invited Jamie to sit a while longer in the park, but the clanging of the bell announced the coming of the train and Jamie ran off like a deer, promising to come back as soon as he sold his papers.

He was only gone about twenty minutes when he returned all smiles.

"Why, Jamie, you sold out quick."

"I was pretty near sold out when Miss Pemberton come off the train and bought the rest and told me I ought to go and play with the other boys. She guv me this, too," he said, exhibiting a silver dollar. "She's a daisy all right."

When Mr. Fairchild recovered from his surprise, he said, "Why, Jamie, how did you come to know Miss Pemberton?"

"Oh, she's the lady what bought out the bakery and guv me ice cream. Yer see I've had it two times now."

"But," said Mr. Fairchild impatiently, "how did you come to know her in the first place?"

"Why the time I was pretty near drug under the car. Say, she's a fine lady."

Mr. Fairchild could not get much satisfaction out of Jamie, so handing him a silver dollar he said good bye.

Jamie stood rooted to the spot, then turned the dollar over and examined it, then bit it and tried in various ways known only to the street gamin to see if it were genuine. "It's the straight goods," he murmured at length, and was starting off, when Mr. Fairchild called him back. He involuntarily grasped his dollar a little tighter, but Mr. Fairchild had no designs on it. He only wanted to know if Miss Pemberton had a gentleman with her.

"Aw, no! Jest a lady, all dressed up in silk. They went off in a kerrige, mister."

This was some comfort at least. She had not been off with Tom. "I wonder what he means by hanging round like he does," thought Fairchild, forgetting that he was doing precisely the same thing himself.

Esther and her mother reached home and found Mr. Pemberton quite excited. As they started to ascend the stairs, he called his wife back. "Eva, the very thing I was afraid of has happened."

"Stocks have not gone down, have they, Stanley?"

"No, it's not quite as bad as that, but it's bad enough. Tom asked me this afternoon for Esther's hand in marriage."

"Oh, Stanley, you scared me; I thought it was something awful."

"Isn't that awful enough? Do you think I am going to be turned down at every corner? I know Fairchild has grown to think something of Esther. He intimated that much to me a few evenings ago, and now here's Tom with his paltry fifty thousand and asking for her. She must marry Fairchild. You see that my wishes are carried out," said Mr. Pemberton, glaring savagely at his wife. "Do you hear?"

"I can't do anything with Esther," said the now trembling Mrs. Pemberton.

"You know that you ought never have let her get away from you as you have done. Most mothers have their daughters under their control. Something must be done to keep it from going any farther."

Poor Mrs. Pemberton left the room absolutely at a loss to know what to do. She knew Esther's mind was far superior to hers. She could not argue with her, but resolved to do the best she could with her. She changed her visiting toilet and dressed for dinner. Esther had been down stairs some time, and wondered what her father and mother were talking about, little dreaming that she was the subject of their conversation. Mrs. Pemberton wisely decided to say nothing about it until after dinner. Esther enjoyed the meal with the keen relish that belongs to a young, healthy girl, but noticed her father was rather absent-minded. After dinner they retired to the drawing-room, Mr. Pemberton bringing up the subject, much to the relief of his wife.

"Esther," he remarked, "I had a visit from Tom this afternoon." Esther blushed, knowing the substance of it. "He wishes to marry you."

"Yes, father; he told me he was going to ask your consent."

"Then it was all arranged without consulting me, eh?" Esther was silent.

"Well, you may as well know now as any other time, I'll never give my consent to it."

"Oh, father, why?" pleaded Esther.

"Because I have other views for you."

"For me?" said Esther, wondering what he was alluding to.

"Yes, I intend you shall marry Fairchild."

"He has never asked me, father."

"No; but I have every reason to think he will, though."

"I can't marry him, father. I don't love him, and I do love Tom."

"Now, Esther, you know my wishes, and I expect to be obeyed. So let us not discuss it any further. By the way, I told Tom to stay away for a couple of weeks."

This shocked Esther so she could not answer. How could she live two weeks without Tom, just as they both acknowledged their love for one another. If she could only have seen Tom for five minutes; but to be abruptly deprived of his society like this was unbearable.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOM'S BANISHMENT.

Tom felt the separation severely. Esther was his first and only love. He had planned on such happy times together. Now he was to work hard all day and not even be able to see her in the evenings as had been his custom. He felt like Esther. If they had only known they were to be parted, it would have been easier. Two weeks to their loving hearts seemed like an eternity.

Mr. Fairchild called in the evening, and was rejoiced to find Tom absent, but did not know the cause. Esther was in no mood to entertain him. He told her about his meeting with Jamie. This interested her for a while. By and by he and Mr. Pemberton entered into a spirited conversation regarding certain stocks, much to Esther's relief, who was too unhappy to even talk. At last, as he rose to go, he asked Mr. Pemberton's permission to call next morning, as he wanted to see him on business. Wishing them all good night, he left. Esther went wearily to her room, not to sleep, but to think over this new phase in her life.

In the morning Mr. Fairchild called and was ushered into the library where Mr. Pemberton was busily reading the morning newspaper.

"Good morning," he said, looking up. "You are early, or am I late?"

"You are late, I think, Mr. Pemberton, it's past eleven o'clock."

"My how the time does go," exclaimed the latter.

"I suppose, Mr. Pemberton, you wondered what business I could have with you. It is something very near my heart. I wish to marry your daughter and want your consent before I ask her."

"Now that's what I like," said the well pleased Mr. Pemberton.

"Here's Tom asked her first and me after."

"Then I am too late?"

"No," said Mr. Pemberton; "you have as good a chance as any one."

"She's worth winning, sir."

"No man ever had a better daughter and no man will ever get a better wife," said Mr. Pemberton enthusiastically. "Personally I like you, and hope you will succeed."

"Then I have your permission to try," said Fairchild.

"Yes, with all my heart go ahead. You will find Esther rather obstinate, but I think she will come to in time. If she says 'No,' don't let that discourage you. A woman's 'No' generally means 'Yes' they say. You can win her if you persevere long enough."

"Well, I am willing to wait, if there's any hope of final success. Thank you, Mr. Pemberton, for your encouragement."

"Don't go," said the latter, "stay and have luncheon with us."

"I would be glad to, with the ladies' permission."

Mr. Pemberton went in search of Esther and her mother. The former was busily arranging some flowers, while the latter was interviewing the cook, an incident that could not be disturbed with impunity. So he directed Esther to amuse Mr. Fairchild until luncheon, he himself having to make a hurried trip down town. After he left the room he went to the dining-room and found Mrs. Pemberton just coming from her visit to the cook.

"Eva," he said, as she came into the room, "Mr. Fairchild has asked my permission to marry Esther."

"I do hope she will, Stanley; it bothers me so. Some one is always wanting to marry her, but no one seems to be just right in her opinion but Tom, and you won't agree to that."

"No, Eva, I won't. It would be the height of folly. She is too young to understand, but some day she will thank me." He took his hat up and hurried off on his business errand, saying he would be back in an hour.

As soon as Esther greeted Mr. Fairchild, he plunged into his avowal of love.

"Oh, Mr. Fairchild, please don't! I never could love you."

"Why?"

"Because I love some one else."

"Esther, do try to love me a little. That will satisfy me, for I know in time you would give your heart wholly to me. I am not so repulsive, am I?"

"No, that's not it. Can't you see I cannot love you; my heart is not my own to give."

"Who is the fortunate possessor of it?" demanded Mr. Fairchild.

"That cannot possibly concern you," answered Esther.

"Your father told me I could have some hope. He himself said he preferred me."

"It does not follow that I do," said Esther with dignity. My no is final. Please do not ask me again, Mr. Fairchild. We can be good friends, but nothing else."

"That won't satisfy me. I want more than friendship," he said warmly.

"I esteem you, Mr. Fairchild, but cannot love you."

"Won't you take a little time to consider?" he pleaded.

"May be you will change your mind."

"No, I never will," firmly answered Esther.

"Well, I'll not give up yet. I do hope you will look at it in a different light after thinking it over. I can indulge you in every comfort and luxury and will give myself up entirely to your happiness."

"Thank you, Mr. Fairchild, for your generous offer, but it can never be. I believe you would do all you say, but

for me to love you is impossible. My heart is already given, and there is where all my love is."

Seeing she was obdurate, he did not press his suit any further, for the present. He was confident he could win her yet. He did not know Esther. She was Tom's heart and soul. He embodied to her all that was noble and lovable and she felt he would eventually in some way overcome her father's objection to his lack of money. She was willing to wait, no matter how long, for this consummation. She knew he felt the same about it.

Mr. Pemberton returned just in time for luncheon. Evidently his run down town proved satisfactory, for he was in the best of humors. Esther was determined to show no sign of discomfiture, so kept up with the rest in their pleasantries. This deceived her father, who thought she had answered Mr. Fairchild's proposal favorably. So he was unusually nice to her during the meal. She understood it and let him remain in ignorance of the fact. After luncheon Mr. Fairchild excused himself as he had an engagement at the links. As soon as he took his departure Mr. Pemberton asked Esther if she gave Mr. Fairchild any encouragement.

"No, father," she said, "but he believes in perseverance. He seems to have an idea that I will change my mind."

"You will, too, Esther, when you think it over."

"Perhaps," was all she said.

She intended to humor her father in order to get him to remove the ban from Tom. She had neither heard or seen anything of him. She knew he would be too honorable to write and felt there was nothing to do but wait patiently until the time was up. Having nothing special to do she thought she would go to see how Mrs. Mason was getting on. She felt very much interested in this woman and was pleased to see how much she appreciated it.

"There are some grateful people after all," said Mr. Pemberton, when Esther told him where she was going. "This woman seems to be willing to work, and that's more than I can say of most such cases."

"Yes," said Esther, "she is the most industrious individual I ever saw. There's nothing her fingers can not fashion. She just delights in her work. Good bye, father," called out Esther, as she went out the door.

Mr. Pemberton was delighted with the disposition she was showing. It augured well for his schemes. "Fairchild likes this sort of business that Esther is indulging in, so it's to my interest to encourage it. There is no reason in the world why she should not marry him."

Mrs. Mason was very pleased to see Esther, and showed her how the work was piling up almost more than she could attend to.

"I have one drawback, Miss Pemberton; so many of the ladies object to the location of my home. I was wondering if you could help me some way to open a business in a central locality. I really believe I will have to keep an assistant. If you would help me, Miss Pemberton, I feel confident I could soon repay you every dollar."

Esther saw at once the feasibility of this plan, and promised to see some agent about finding a suitable store and launching her out in business.

Mrs. Mason was very grateful for Esther's interest in her and thought as she took her leave, "What a beautiful world this would be if there were more such girls as Miss Pemberton."

Mr. Fairchild continued his visits, but did not annoy Esther with any love making. He felt confident she would return his love in time, so was content to bask in the sunshine of her smiles for the present.

She was careful not to give him any encouragement that could be misconstrued by him. Esther laid before him her plans to help Mrs. Mason. He fell right in with them. Glad of an excuse to be in Esther's company, he offered to go next day and find out what could be done.

"The rent must not be too high," said Esther. "She is very ambitious, so we must not let her overreach herself."

"I'll attend to that, Miss Pemberton. Why can't you let me help her, too? I have an interest in some business

property down town, and as my share would gladly let her have a place rent free for six months. If at the end of that time she proves any kind of a business woman, let her pay rent from that time on."

"That would be a splendid plan," said Esther, enthusiastically.

"If you have no engagement to-morrow morning I would be pleased to take you to look at it."

Esther having no engagement, it was arranged that they go.

Mr. Fairchild found Esther waiting for him next morning at the appointed time. They started off briskly, chatting over their joint scheme. Just as they stopped to take the car, they came face to face with Tom. He greeted Esther heartily, slyly squeezing her hand, which expressed his pleasure better than commonplace words could before anyone. He nodded coolly to Fairchild, but before he had hardly time to address Esther, the car came, and wishing him good bye, Esther and Mr. Fairchild stepped on it. Tom stood a long time watching the retreating car. At last muttering to himself, said:

"I wonder where he is taking her at this hour of the morning. I suppose while I have been in seclusion gnawing my heart out Esther and Fairchild have been having a fine time. I wish I could just see her alone for a few moments. If I thought she was forgetting me, I don't know what I would do. Something desperate I know. But I don't believe she will love anyone but me. I have her word for it, and nothing can make me doubt it. But I wish, all the same, she would not go anywhere with that fellow." His thoughts were suddenly disturbed by hearing the town clock strike the hour. "Time I was at the bank," he said, as he started off. All day long the disturbing element of Esther and Fairchild worried him, more so because he could not imagine where they were going, and was jealous of any man being in her company but him.

Esther, on entering the car, sat down and was soon

lost in thought, much to the disgust of her companion, who really enjoyed her society this morning, she was so much like her old self again.

"Oh," thought Esther, "if I could only have talked with Tom for a little while. It's a shame for father to keep him away like that, especially when he is among strangers." For some unaccountable reason Esther seemed to blame Fairchild for it all now. She wished now she had not come with him. The rest of the journey being passed in silence, he wished so too. As they neared his agent, they both began to talk again, but not so freely as before. They alighted from the car, but on inquiring found the store was rented. But agent-like, he had one in the next block. He drove them to it, and as it seemed desirable in every way, Mr. Fairchild gave his check for six months rent, at the same time ordering several improvements made at his own expense. This pleased Esther so much that she forgot her resentment toward him and invited him home to luncheon.

Next day Esther notified Mrs. Mason, who was overjoyed at her good fortune in having such thoughtful friends. Her few belongings were speedily moved to the new location, which proved a wonderful success, and with a little judicious advertising Mrs. Mason's future was now assured. She was in a fair way to earn an honorable living for herself and child, thanks to the helping hands who kindly brought her out of her troubles.

Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton were well pleased at the turn matters were taking. They thought they saw Esther's interest in Mr. Fairchild increasing, and were delighted when they took to planning their charities together.

Mr. Fairchild felt, too, he was gaining ground. Esther had been more friendly to him lately than at any time since Tom's banishment.

Esther herself was feeling happier, not because of Mr. Fairchild, but because the time for Tom to visit her home again was getting nearer and nearer. Her father and mother planned many entertainments to which Mr. Fairchild was always welcome, in fact they were mainly ar-

ranged for his and Esther's benefit, their aim being to keep the young couple together as much as possible.

In the meantime Tom was fretting under the restraint that kept him out of Esther's life. He had heard through various channels of the close attention Fairchild was paying Esther. In fact, at the club it was openly announced that they were engaged to be married. Although Tom did not for a minute believe that Esther would treat him so, it caused him no little uneasiness. He was anxious to hear from her own lips that she was still true to him. His own love for her had grown tenfold by his absence from her. He still loved her with all the intensity of his nature, and although he had every confidence in her loyalty to him, he often wondered if she could be faithful to him and yet enjoy Fairchild's visits.

If he could only have known the state of her feelings as she counted the days which were growing less and less and which would soon cease to be a barrier to their meeting again, he would not need to ask himself this question. She was true as steel to him, to whom she had given all her heart's love.

Tom went at his work with renewed energy, straining every nerve to add to his income, so that Mr. Pemberton would not think him lacking in the energy necessary to the business man of to-day. He would not stoop to any dishonest methods, although he had already several chances to do so. But his conscience would not allow him to enter into any trickery, even if it stood approved of by Mr. Pemberton. He knew Esther's upright nature would abhor such a way of winning her, and he would lose her forever. He made up his mind to let honesty rule his life. He found it very difficult at times to live up to it.

Mr. Pemberton was apparently so engrossed in money matters that he seemed to have forgotten Tom. His joy at seeing what he thought was the culmination of his scheming to bring Esther and Fairchild together knew no bounds. He could almost feel the touch of Fairchild's millions, which he was so anxious to gather into the family treasury. To Esther he was graciousness itself.

She understood it, and tried to keep in his good graces, without encouraging any hopes in Mr. Fairchild's mind.

The latter was confident that her love was almost his now. She did not talk of Tom as she used to; in fact, she seldom mentioned his name—a sign, Mr. Fairchild, thought, very favorable to his suit. Then, too, he had her father on his side. So, taking it on the whole, he was more than pleased with the advance he was making. His love for Esther was just as honorable as Tom's. He felt a better man in her presence and vowed he would do all in his power to make her happy if he should be so fortunate as to win her love. The more he saw of her the deeper was his love. Hers was a nature that was hard to resist. There was a certain personal magnetism about her which made men love her for herself alone. She never consciously tried to win their love with coquetry or wiles; it came to her naturally. It was this that often caused her worry. She would not willingly lead a man on just for the pleasure of trampling his affections under her feet. To her a man's love was too sacred to be lightly won and just as lightly cast aside. She had refused Mr. Fairchild's love because she could not return it, but, to her discomfiture, he kept falling more and more in love with her, although she had made it as plain as possible to him that it was useless. She repeatedly told him her love was already given to another. He was too much of a man to take advantage of her father's desire for himself and his millions, a fact which he was fully aware of.

He knew if he could eventually win Esther it would be himself and not his money she would marry. He believed as he told in perseverance his love and devotion for her were so blind he could not think of anything but success.

This was very hard on Esther. She knew it was hopeless, and felt it would go hard with him when he came to realize it, as he must sooner or later. She was Tom's, and Tom's alone.

Mr. Pemberton could see no reason now to doubt but what Esther and Fairchild were at last in love with one another, so a few days later, meeting Tom and noticing

his changed looks, invited him to dinner. He felt sure Esther had got over her infatuation, as he called it, for Tom, and felt sorry for the boy, as he expressed it. "Office work does not seem to agree with him, but money is what greases the wheels of friendship and makes them run smoothly. No money, no friends! is the twentieth century motto, as Tom may as well get acquainted with it now as any other time."

Tom was very pleased as well as astonished when Mr. Pemberton again invited him to the house. The prospect of seeing Esther brightened him up wonderfully. His fellow clerks stopped and looked after him as he whistled gaily on his way to the club, preparatory to going to the Pemberton residence.

"I wonder what got into Seymour that makes him feel so happy and gay," they remarked to one another. "Probably a raise in his salary."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REUNION.

Just before dinner Mr. Pemberton told Esther that Tom would be there to dine, and not to hurry the meal, as he was liable to be a little late. "In fact, I did not tell him in time, so we must give him a little grace."

Esther was dumfounded. She ran up stairs to put a few extra touches to her toilet in his honor. "Just think of it," she said to herself, dear old Tom is coming to-night. "I wonder if father is going to let him come back and visit like he used to. But we will enjoy all that is coming to us. We know now father may exile one of us any time, and this time we will be prepared."

Tom needed no grace; he was on time, happy in the thought of seeing Esther once more under her own roof.

She watched for him, anxious to meet him alone and have just a few precious moments in his society before the general family meeting. She waited in the hall until she

heard his footsteps. As soon as he entered the door she was there to meet him. He rushed forward and embraced her warmly.

"Esther, this is the happiest moment I have had since we parted," he said, as he released her.

"Me, too," said Esther, laughingly.

"I was awfully jealous of Fairchild's coming here so often when I could not even see you. I thought you had forgotten me," said Tom. "Talk about penance. I have done enough to last my life out."

"And," said Esther, "how do you think I enjoyed it?"

"Oh, you had Fairchild to amuse you."

"Tom, don't you mention that man's name again to-night."

Hearing the rest of the family stirring around, Tom divested himself of his overcoat and was ready to meet them. As they came in view he was greeted warmly by Mrs. Pemberton, who really liked him and was glad to see him back. Mr. Pemberton extended the hand of friendship, feeling a little guilty of the treatment he had given his old chum's son.

The evening was spent very pleasantly until Fairchild's appearance. Then the conversation became general.

Mr. Pemberton had some returns from a stock speculation which he had induced Fairchild to invest in, and asked him to come into the library to hear the details. He made several excuses, but eventually yielded to Mr. Pemberton's urgent requests, reluctantly leaving Tom and Esther together.

As he left the room they could hardly restrain their joy, and casting a look at Mrs. Pemberton, who was nodding sleepily, gave themselves up to their love. They planned all sorts of schemes, if they were ever parted again.

Esther reassured Tom again and again of her love for him. She knew now he would not doubt her. He was satisfied she was his and his alone.

The evening sped rapidly to these two. They both knew it was no use just yet to ask the father's consent to their marriage, but were willing to wait and trust one another.

They decided it was best not to appear too friendly, as it might mean another separation.

Their matter-of-fact manner deceived Mr. Pemberton, and he decided their love was nothing but a sort of convulsion, violent while it lasted, but soon over with.

Mr. Fairchild was well pleased, too. He was thoroughly disarmed by their cool attitude to one another.

Esther's father saw no need now of keeping her and Tom apart, and made no more restrictions to his visits.

They were both careful not to show the slightest affection toward one another in any one's presence. By doing this they were at least able to enjoy each other's company.

Things were now moving along very smoothly and to everyone's satisfaction.

A few weeks after this, on entering the bank one morning, Tom was requested to go to the manager's office.

"Good morning, Mr. Seymour," said the manager. "At our directors' meeting yesterday we picked you out to go to Havana to negotiate with the bank there about a loan they wish to have. We want you to examine the security and if it's as they say, telegraph to us. They want the money as soon as possible, and we feel we can rely on you to do your duty toward the bank. It is an honor seldom accorded to one who has been so short a time in our service."

Tom was too astonished to speak at first. He felt they had indeed honored him with such confidence. Recovering his self-possession, he inquired how soon he was expected to go.

The manager replied: "Just as soon as convenient, Mr. Seymour—to-morrow, for that matter. Could you manage to be ready by that time?"

"Why, certainly," answered Tom. "The notice is short, but there is nothing to prevent my going then."

"Then we may consider it settled. You can report at the office by noon to-morrow if convenient."

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "You can look for me at that time. I will be prepared to start at whatever time you designate."

Here was another blow to Tom. Of course he appreciated the honor bestowed on him, but to think just as he was permitted to visit Esther again he should be sent off on this mission. They could write to each other, to be sure, but that was poor satisfaction. After being parted so long to think that they would have to be parted again.

He hurried to Esther to tell her the news. She was so surprised she burst into tears.

"Oh, Tom," she sobbed, "how long will you be gone? I'll just die this time."

"No, you won't, Esther," said Tom, trying to soothe her. "I'll soon be back again, and may be your father will not be so hard on us when he finds the directors have trusted me with an errand of such importance."

"But," said Esther, "I know just what he will say—'There's no money in it.' I suppose he will consider the honor nothing."

"But it is," protested Tom; "it's as good as saying your honest and I can trust you with this important business. That means something to me, to think they have so much faith in my ability to value the securities."

"Don't let us waste any more time talking about it—it's too precious," said Esther.

"I ought to tell your father, he comes as near to me as a relative. My uncle I can see on the way there."

"There's time enough," said Esther. "You had better stay to dinner and tell him then."

Tom accepted with alacrity. He hated to leave Esther even for a minute.

They all spent a most enjoyable evening.

Mr. Pemberton expressed his satisfaction at the news. He congratulated Tom on his being chosen out of the entire bank force.

"The business world is getting mighty particular these times," he exclaimed, "whom they send on such errands."

"Yes," said Tom; "I appreciate it, and intend to do all in my power to prove that their trust in me was not misplaced."

As Tom took his leave he promised Esther to make a short call on her in the afternoon before he left.

He reported to the manager promptly on time, which pleased the latter. He liked punctuality in everyone, especially among the bank employees.

As soon as the business was satisfactorily arranged, Tom went to his quarters to pack his belongings. When that was finished, he made his farewell visit to Esther. It was necessarily rather short, but both were glad of the chance to have even a hurried farewell. They parted with vigorous protestations of undying love on both sides.

Soon Esther was left alone. She disconsolately watched Tom's retreating figure until out of sight. Then she sat down and counted how long it would be before he returned. This comforted her. Soon hearing her mother coming she decided to look as cheerful as possible under the circumstances, so as not to arouse her suspicions.

As soon as Mrs. Pemberton came into the room she inquired if Tom had left.

"Yes," answered Esther. "It was just a hurried good bye. He had so little time to catch the train. He wants to stay over night with his uncle."

"Esther, you don't know what a pleasure it is to your father and me that your infatuation for Tom has ceased. Now you can see for yourself how much better your father's judgment was than your own. Mr. Fairchild is a much better match for you, and will be able to indulge you in every luxury. And you know Tom could not do that.

"Mother, you and father may just as well undeceive yourselves. I have no intention of marrying Mr. Fairchild. I respect him and consider him a fine example of an honorable man, but love him I cannot. Of course, I'll admit his superiority financially to Tom, but in no other way do I consider him his equal."

"What! Do you mean to say you still have that insane notion of marrying Tom?"

"Of course I have. I don't call it insane though. He is to me the very best fellow in the world. Come, mother,

you know you like Tom best yourself; but you feel you ought to bend to father's will in this matter; that's all that makes you favor Mr. Fairchild. Isn't it now, mother?"

"Esther, between you and your father I am just bewildered. I don't care whom you marry. You will marry whom you please anyway," said Mrs. Pemberton, nervously.

"Of course I will, mother dear. Can't you put in a good word with father for Tom?"

"Esther, don't ask me to promise anything. Your father's will is my law."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Esther, wearily; "I wish all the money was at the bottom of the sea."

"Don't wish anything so terrible as that," said Mrs. Pemberton in alarm, as if she thought wishing it could make it a fact.

"Well, mother, I did not mean quite all of it, but Mr. Fairchild's. No, I don't mean that either. He wants enough to buy him something to eat. Oh, I just don't know what I mean, mother; but money does bring lots of trouble as well as pleasure."

"That's right, Esther. I never knew what trouble was until your father set his heart on Mr. Fairchild's millions."

After making a short visit to his uncle and family Tom went rapidly eastward. He was quite excited over his trip. Now he had started on it he realized how for the first time in his life he would leave his native land. He saw many things in his hurried trip toward the Atlantic coast that were new to him, and began to realize the vastness of the land that gave him birth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OFF TO HAVANA.

Tom found a steamer waiting, so lost no time in getting his ticket and was soon on his way to Havana. It was his first experience on Old Briny, but as it caused him no discomfort he enjoyed it immensely. The bracing sea air

acted like a tonic on his nerves. It felt good to him to inhale the fresh sea breeze. Before many hours he was walking the deck and whistling merrily, like an old traveler. The passengers were very congenial and soon made friends.

Tom used discretion and never mentioned the purpose of his trip. He was not like so many young men, full of braggadocio, nor yet was he over cautious. To his fellow travelers he was just simply taking his first sea voyage.

The ocean was a never-ending source of admiration to him. He watched the huge waves with their various shadings of greens and blues bounding along, swelling up gracefully and curving in the sunlight until the glint of it was almost too dazzling for the eye, then breaking into foaming masses, boiling and seething until another swell raised them up into a mass of curling waves, again to be broken into foam and roll away.

The voyage was over all too soon for Tom. Alas! for modern inventions where speed carries us so fast over the surface that you have so little time to enjoy the things that are so beautiful.

They entered the magnificent harbor of Havana just as the sun was setting. The sight of it was one never to be forgotten.

The great ball of molten gold sunk slowly down behind the hills, leaving after it a glorious field of crimson and gold, blending gradually into more brilliant and transparent shades of purple, chrome yellow and pale green. These in turn gave way to lovely tints of gray and pink which reflected their brilliance and glory on the distant mountains, leaving a picture deep down in memory's store house never to be effaced.

The almost reverential stillness that had taken possession of everyone was broken now as they were getting near the dock.

Everyone bustled about getting their luggage together. Tom, having nothing but his suit case, was quickly passed by the vigilant custom house officer. He went ashore and was soon being driven at a rapid rate to the hotel.

After dinner he took a walk about the town, as nothing

in the shape of business would be attended to until banking hours next morning.

He was astonished at the size and progressiveness of it. Of course he was well informed about its resources, but failed to comprehend it until he was face to face with the reality.

Finding it rather lonesome walking around among strangers, Tom concluded to return to the hotel and retire.

Early next morning he strolled about seeing the sights, until such time as the bank would open. Then, armed with his credentials, he called on the manager. He was received with polite effusiveness.

Signor Castruccio, being a shrewd business man, soon came to the point, being anxious to have the money as soon as possible.

He invited Tom to go with him and see the security he offered.

On reaching the sidewalk they stepped into an auto, and were soon speeding far into the country.

Tom had not gone very far when he found he had no ordinary man to deal with. The Signor was craftiness itself, and made several innuendoes about how much there was in it for Tom.

After riding some distance he drew Tom's attention to the vast acres of uncultivated land he wished to give as security. He placed its value far above the regular market price, in fact more than double.

Tom asked if this was all he had to offer.

He answered: "This land is worth four times what I ask as a loan on it."

Tom thought different, and after examining it, told him he would let him know to-morrow if they would accept it.

He urged Tom strongly to decide right there, but he would not. Then he offered him a bribe that ran well up into four figures if he would push it through.

Tom indignantly refused, and said: "This is the bank's business, not mine. I was sent here to attend to it and will do so to the best of my ability."

"Come, my friend," said Signor Castruccio, "I can make

it well worth your while if you assist me in getting this loan."

Tom refused to even consider it now. He could not and would not do business with such a man.

This annoyed Signor Castruccio considerably, but he kept his temper, which was fast rising, well in control.

When they reached the hotel Tom asked to be let out, promising to give his answer during the afternoon. The Signor bowed graciously, evidently restored to good humor, at least outwardly.

It was just the hour for lunch when Tom entered the hotel. He sat down with the rest of the guests and was soon enjoying his meal. After it was over he started out on the piazza to indulge in a smoke. Just as he took his seat one of his fellow passengers came up to him.

Tom was delighted to see him, and grasped his hand warmly. They sat and talked some time. He finally asked Tom to go with him to hunt up a relative he had there.

Tom gladly agreed to go with him in an hour's time.

"That will just suit me," exclaimed his friend. "I will be ready by that time."

Tom excused himself and started off to make inquiries as to the value of the land the bank offered as security, and also as to Signor Castruccio's standing as a business man. On hearing nothing favorable and much that was not to his credit, Tom decided to have no dealings whatever with him. So he wrote a letter to that effect, and, calling a messenger, dispatched it to Signor Castruccio, who on receipt of it grew furious.

He had tried unknown to Tom almost every other concern and had been turned down.

Tom then telegraphed to the directors what he had done. He also sent a telegram to Esther announcing his safe arrival.

On returning to the hotel he found his friend waiting. They walked briskly up the street, and after a few inquiries found the house they were looking for. They stepped up to the door, rang the bell and were admitted.

His friend introduced Tom to his relatives.

They had a very pleasant visit, after which they left, promising to return next evening. They bought tickets for the theatre on their way home. After dinner they attended, but were very much disappointed to find it was in Spanish, a tongue they were not familiar with. They soon lost interest in the performance.

Tom's mind wandered off to Esther and counted how long it would take his message to reach her, there being no mail going out until he himself went.

Next evening they made the call in return to the invitation they received, and were rather surprised to find it was quite an elaborate entertainment.

As they entered the room the daughter of the house came forward to greet them, and was particularly kind in presenting them to the guests.

"I do wish Alphonse was here," she exclaimed, "he is so fond of Americans."

As she flitted off to welcome some more guests, Tom's friend remarked, "I thought she was an only child, but I suppose this Alphonse is her brother. Really we hardly know a thing about them. My mother's cousin married a Spanish girl years ago and never came back to the States. We understood they had only one child, a daughter."

"Well," said Tom, "she's a handsome girl, all right."

"That's what she is," answered his friend.

They made their way toward the music. The tinkling of the mandolin and guitar quite captivated them. They were played as only the Spanish can play them, with all the dreamy softness and sweetness peculiar to those instruments and their players.

After enjoying it for some time, they concluded they would take their leave, and return to the hotel. Just as they crossed the room they were confronted by the daughter of the house, who introduced Tom and his friend to Alphonse. Judge of his astonishment when he found himself face to face with his old enemy, Count Alphonse De Galle.

He bowed coldly in response to the introduction. His friend extended his hand in greeting.

The Count was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I have once more ze felicity of meeting Monsieur Seymour." He bowed low as he said it, and muttered something in Spanish that Tom did not understand.

Tom glared at him and involuntarily closed his fists as if he would like to have another settlement with him.

The Count was not the least disconcerted, but asked how "Mees" Pemberton's good health was.

Tom ignored his query, much to the surprise of his friend.

The Count, nothing daunted, chatted on about the Pembertons, in spite of Tom's look of contempt, which he could not help seeing.

At last Tom said, "I thought you went to France."

"Ah, no, Monsieur, that was a mistake of ze newspapers. I have been here some time, and now I think I stay here forever," he said, as he placed his hand over his heart and bowed low in the direction of the young lady.

"Then," thought his friend, "this is no relative of mine. I could go my beautiful Spanish cousin, but that monstrosity never! never could I let him claim even the remotest kind of relationship, even for my mother's sake."

As soon as they reached the street his friend was anxious to solve this puzzle. Here was a young man apparently of good family and used to social ways, yet acting in such a manner toward his cousin's guest that was nothing short of rudeness.

"Say, friend Seymour, what got into you to act that way to my cousin's guest?"

"I don't wonder you ask me that question," said Tom. "I ought to have had myself in better control, but he came on me so suddenly I forgot everything but my desire to lay hold of him."

"Then you have met him before," said his friend.

"Yes," answered Tom.

Then he related the circumstances, being careful not to mention the names or locality they met in.

When he had finished his friend said, "I don't blame you. I wonder if my cousin knows anything about him."

I have a notion to put her wise, as the saying goes."

Having a week more to wait before the steamer sailed, Tom put most of his time in with his friend, who was going to do the island later on, as he expressed it. He was very anxious to have Tom's companionship, but the latter told him he was obliged to return as soon as possible, although he would enjoy nothing better than to explore this country, new to him in every way.

They became regular visitors now at Signor Bartons, as his cousin was called.

They could see now that the daughter was madly infatuated with the Count Alphonse, and wisely decided to let them alone. She was of an impetuous nature, that saw nothing out of the way in his tempestuous method of love-making.

It was perfectly natural to her that he should make a declaration of love to her the first time he met her. She considered it a compliment to her beauty. It was merely the point of view you took of such matters. After all, she was used to such impulsiveness. What pleased her would frighten a girl of Esther's bringing up. It was just a matter of temperament and environment. Just as things we do shock our Oriental friends.

The time was drawing near for Tom's return. He was a little uneasy as to how the bank would regard his way of settling the business. He felt he could render an account of it that would prove entirely satisfactory to them.

Tom's friend was exceedingly disappointed at the prospect of losing his society and when the day came for his departure, was on hand to wish him bon voyage.

The return trip was as delightful as the one over had been, and as Tom reached the end of the journey it was with regret. It took him but a short time to go by rail to the end of his destination. He then took an auto and hurried to the bank, anxious to get there before closing hours and report.

He found the directors were more than pleased with his judgment in dealing with the transaction.

They found out after his departure that the concern was

in an almost insolvent condition, but concluded to make it a test as to how Tom would manage it. They could easily refuse to grant the loan even if he promised it.

As soon as he took his departure, one of the directors proposed putting him in line for promotion at no distant date. This was agreed on unanimously.

Tom's thoughts now turned to Esther. Now that he had relieved his mind of the responsibility, he hastened his pace, eager to see her again. She received him warmly and made him go into the minutest detail as to how he spent every minute of his time since he left her.

She was as astonished as Tom had been to hear that the Count had not gone to France.

"Well," she said, "we won't grudge him his senorita, now we are so happy ourselves. I don't care, as long as he is so far away from me. Probably he has an elastic kind of heart, that can always find room for one more occupant. I don't think my refusing his affections wounded him much."

Tom took his old place in the Pemberton household. He found Fairchild still persevering in the hopes of Esther's final capitulation, but felt no uneasiness now on that score.

Mr. Pemberton was pleased at Tom's way of doing business, and felt that Tom was in a fair way to get rich. "But," he soliloquized, "that's too far off. Fairchild has his millions and it's well and securely invested." He had not given up by any means his ambition to have it added some day to his own.

Mr. Fairchild was very much interested in Tom's description of Havana, and decided to visit and explore the whole island before long. In the last year he had experienced a great desire to see it; in fact to get out of the beaten track of travel. The old world and the Orient he knew almost by heart. There was nothing new to interest him there. But this new possession had an attraction for him he found hard to resist. He longed to investigate its interior and its possibilities.

Tom and he now seemed to understand each other better and were fast becoming good friends, as Fairchild said to

him one day, "Seymour, we both love the same girl, and have, I hope, an equal chance of winning her. May the best, in her estimation, win. I will hold no enmity to you should you be the fortunate one, and I hope you will hold none to me, should I be the favored one."

They clasped hands over the bargain and their friendship was cemented closer together by the thorough understanding that now existed between them.

Tom was happy in the knowledge of his being the chosen one. Fairchild was happy in the ignorance of it.

Tom resumed his work at the bank, feeling grateful for the confidence placed in him. He decided he would bend all his energies to their interests. He liked to be employed at something that needed brain activity. He could not put in his time like Fairchild in out-door sports. He liked them well enough as a pastime or recreation. His nature needed something that would expand the mind and improve his financial standing, not that he cared so much for money, but liked the comforts and conveniences it brought. Moreover, he wanted Esther to have everything her heart desired. He knew she had always had, and did not want to deprive her of it when she was his.

How that incited him to industry to know that some day not far off Esther would be his alone. He had not spoken to Mr. Pemberton about it since his first interview. He knew it was no use yet awhile.

Esther had tried in vain to get her mother to help her and Tom to win the father over to their views, but it was useless. So they bided their time.

Tom often envied Fairchild his freedom. He was able to meet Esther at the links and tennis court every day, while he could only see her evenings, but was happy in the thought that Fairchild could not win her from him. She had given her love to him and could not be won away from him.

CHAPTER XIX.

ESTHER REFUSES FAIRCHILD A SECOND TIME.

Fairchild felt the time had come now to find out Esther's real feeling for him, and the first opportunity he again asked her to marry him. She refused him as kindly as she could, and told him she had every respect for him, but could not love him.

He accused her of encouraging him to believe she had grown to love him. When she asked him to prove any occasion where she had given him the slightest encouragement, he failed to recall a single instance.

He took his refusal very much to heart. Esther had now become a necessity to his happiness. Their lives had grown together. He never thought of any one but her in connection with his future. He hardly knew what to say or do. He knew he could not conscientiously say that she had given him any hopes. He himself was the one to blame. He was so blinded with his love for her that he felt she must feel the same way towards him. This caused a break in their friendship, no real falling out, but just a simple break in the cord that bound their common interests together.

When she told Tom about it, he felt genuine pity for Fairchild. He knew he was a man that was not attracted by every new face. He seldom gave the average girl more than a passing look. He knew Esther a long time before she awakened this love in him, and now that he realized it he loved her with all the fervor of his nature, but knew now it was useless. He moped around his club for several days, and then decided to go away for a while and forget it. He had ever since Tom's return from Havana wanted to go there, but now declared he could not enjoy it, as secretly he had always pictured Esther by his side in his ramblings. He could not endure the thought of going there alone. He concluded to try a trip somewhere else this time, hoping later on to go there. It took him a long time to de-

cide where to go, until one evening he accidentally heard a young English friend mention he was going to Ceylon to visit a brother who had a tea plantation there.

Fairchild asked permission to join him. His friend, delighted with the idea of company, readily acquiesced, as it was a long journey.

He made a hasty preparation for the voyage, and went in a few evenings to say good bye to Esther and Tom.

They were really sorry to see him go, and sympathized with him in his loneliness.

As he shook hands with Tom, he said, "Well, Tom, the best has won. God bless you both, and may all the happiness that I thought would be mine be yours and Esther's."

Their eyes were dim with tears as they said farewell.

"Poor Fairchild," said Tom, as he left them. "I do feel awfully sorry for him. Oh, Esther, how can I ever do enough for you after your faithfulness to me. His money was a big temptation. I used to envy him a little, but now I think he would gladly exchange his money for a little of our happiness. Strange how things go in this life, isn't it? We always want what we can't have, and get what we don't want. But it's a pretty good world anyway. May be he will find another Esther some day. Who knows?"

Mr. Pemberton was very much surprised at Fairchild's sudden resolve to travel, but as neither he nor Esther mentioned the cause of it, he was in utter ignorance of it, and remarked to his wife, "It's strange that he should go off without asking Esther to marry him. He led me to believe that was his intention only a few days ago. I wish now I had spoken to him about it."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Pemberton, "he wanted to go away from her and see if he really does love her."

"That's a brilliant idea, Eva," said Mr. Pemberton, sarcastically. This remark caused Mrs. Pemberton to subside immediately.

"Yes," continued Mr. Pemberton, "I was remiss in my duty toward Esther, to let this man slip off like this. I

don't feel he has any right to trifle with her feelings like that."

Meeting Esther coming down stairs a few minutes later, he said, "Well, Esther, what got into Fairchild to go off like that?"

"I suppose he is tired of doing nothing, father, and thought he would join his friend on his trip."

"That's no way to treat you after you have been so good to him. I'd make him smart for it, if he were here."

"Well, father, he knows what's best."

"I don't know about that, Esther. He will go a long way before he will find your equal."

"Never mind, father, if he is satisfied, we ought to be."

"Indeed," said Mr. Pemberton, "it's a good thing for him he has put so many miles between us. If he had not, there would be something doing right now."

Esther endeavored to soothe her father, but his ire was stirred up at what he thought was a slight on her, and he was aching to have revenge on Fairchild for it. But the innocent cause of it was far out of his reach and hearing.

For several days Mr. Pemberton nursed his wrath. This losing the chance of grasping Mr. Fairchild's millions was a bitter disappointment to him. Although he was abundantly and more than well supplied with money, still he longed for more. He made money his life work. He worked honestly and dishonestly to accomplish his purpose. The greed for gain had taken hold of him like a disease and spread over his whole life. Now there was no curing it; it had to run its course.

These were hard days for Esther. Every time her father came into her presence, it was the signal for a new outburst against Fairchild.

Several times she was on the point of explaining why he left so suddenly, but as soon as she broached the subject he would grow furious at the mere mention of Fairchild's name, and start off on a tirade against him. So Esther concluded not to allude to it any more.

Mrs. Pemberton was, in the meantime, in fear and

trembling of her husband. No matter what she said, he misconstrued it and answered her sharply. She would almost collapse at the sound of his voice.

Esther tried to keep up her mother's spirits, and were it not for Tom's visits, would have had a lonesome time of it.

The whole home seemed to be upset by it. Tom felt an injustice was being done Fairchild. He had acted in an upright manner. He felt he himself would have done the same thing if Esther had rejected him. He knew he would not force his attentions on her any more than Fairchild would. He longed to say something to Mr. Pemberton in Fairchild's defence, but did not dare to as long as he was in his present state of mind. Mr. Pemberton was in no humor to be coaxed or cajoled. There was nothing to do but wait until his brain storm was over.

Tom and Esther redoubled their precautions. It would never do to have Mr. Pemberton's wrath turned on them in their present condition. But they could have rested easy, he had no intention of bothering them. His thoughts were too occupied with his failure to accomplish what he had set his heart on. He worried incessantly over what he called the escape of Fairchild's millions from his grasp. He knew of no other such desirable man among his acquaintance. He thought Fairchild, being young, would be easily moulded into his way of thinking. He did not reckon on Esther's independent nature, that would regulate her life to suit herself independent of his authority over her.

She never could understand her father's avaricious nature. It was the outcome of a disposition to accumulate wealth, that grew on him of late years, more and more as he grew older and which he could not resist now, even if he would try. He had fostered it all his life; and, although he could not possibly use his wealth, he would father it, as a miser would, just for the pleasure of possession.

He was liberal enough to his family because it suited his purpose to have them make a display of it. It represented his wealth better than any other way he knew of. Consequently it pleased him.

He had always humored Esther and indulged her in everything and was still disposed to do so. She was the idol of his heart. He was proud of her intelligence and beauty, and expected great things of her, and he was not disappointed in her. His one redeeming point was his love for Esther. She brought out the good in his nature, the good that lies dormant even in the worst natures, waiting for some particular one to arouse it. She brought the best out of his sordid disposition. Until she came to a marriageable age, they had no difference of opinion; but just as soon as he tried to barter her for a title, and now for money, she asserted her superior mind, and refused to consider such tactics on her father's part. It was then the first coolness in their lives sprang up between them.

Her mother always had a weak, vacillating nature that would rather agree every time than be bothered discussing a subject. It was because of this weakness of character that Esther was thrown more in her father's than her mother's society. Now, for the first time, she felt the need of a mother's advice and counsel, but knew it was useless to look for any comfort from her, and she would not go outside her home for the counsel she needed so badly.

She longed for some good motherly heart to pour out her confidences into, but as this was out of the question, she bore her troubles alone.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIP TO CEYLON.

Mr. Fairchild and his friend started on their intended journey, going first to England, as his young friend wished to visit his parent, before going on such a long trip.

The voyage across the Atlantic was all that could be desired. They had unusually fine weather all the way over, with the exception of a dense fog which they encountered in the British Channel. This caused some delay, but as there was no special hurry, they did not mind it.

The passengers going over were very agreeable, Mr. Fairchild finding solace in the company of a bright English girl named Mabel Lloyd, who sat next to him at his table. They became friends rapidly, as one does on sea voyages. She had been visiting an uncle and aunt in New York, and was very enthusiastic over the country, people, and everything she saw there.

"Just fancy," she told Mr. Fairchild, "mamma was terribly opposed to my visiting my Aunt Maud. She was so prejudiced against her because she was an American. She thought Uncle Charles was doing something awful when he went over there to marry her. But when I tell her how lovely they all are she won't feel so bad. They are going to come over and spend Christmas with us. You know Aunt Maud has never seen a real old English Christmas—Yule logs, boar's head and all that sort of thing. She used to make me tell her over and over again about it. She is just lovely. Mamma can't help liking her. I just adore her. I could not bear to leave her. I hope mamma won't find me changed. She was so fearful of my learning slang over there. You know that's almost a crime in our part of the country. Do you see anything awful about me, Mr. Fairchild?"

"Why, no; you're just—delightful."

"That's awfully nice of you to say so. Don't you know, I think I would like to live in New York forever. I wouldn't dare to tell mamma so, though. Aunt Maud wants me to come back next year. I do hope I can. Maybe mamma will let me."

"I hope you will," said Mr. Fairchild, "I would like to show you the points of interest myself."

"Wouldn't that be lovely," she exclaimed, enthusiastically. "You don't know how much I have enjoyed meeting you. When I came over I was so lonesome on board the steamer. It was my own fault, I know. The gentlemen would ask me to take a walk on the deck and I always refused them."

"Why?" said Mr. Fairchild.

"Well, because mamma told me repeatedly not to do anything that was unmaidenly and to be very circumspect

in my behavior. I was so afraid of not behaving right that I hardly spoke to a soul all the way over. When I told Aunt Maud, she just laughed and said, 'Mabel, you need never be afraid. There are always plenty of good people to protect a girl when she is travelling alone and to take care of her, too, if the necessity comes.' So this time I am just enjoying every day of the journey."

At this juncture his young friend came up.

"Well," Fairchild, he said, "you and Miss Lloyd seem to be getting on capitally."

"Yes," said Fairchild. "We haven't quarreled yet, have we?"

"No, indeed," she said. "How could any one quarrel with you after being so good to them?"

"Say, I'll get jealous, Fairchild. You know I met Miss Lloyd in New York and introduced her to you, and now you have cut me out. Come, Miss Lloyd, let you and I have a turn on the deck before dinner."

"All right," she answered gaily, and soon they were walking briskly, laughing and chatting over their pleasure at seeing their homes again.

"I ought not to say it, but I do hope I can get another chance to visit New York," said Mabel.

"You little traitor, you," laughingly answered the young Englishman. "I don't wish it," he said, "but intend to do it."

"Oh, are you going back soon?"

"No, not for some time. Fairchild and I are going to Ceylon for a trip. My brother lives there, you know, and we planned to go and visit him a while."

"That will be lovely. Men can see so much. It's easy for them to travel. I think this holiday has spoiled me," said Mabel. "I'll be wanting to go all the time."

"That's it," said the young Englishman. "Once you begin, you can't stay still. You want to go all the time. The spirit of restlessness has got hold of me, too. This will be the first time in two years that I have been home. I know the Mater will feel awfully bad when I tell her I am going to see my brother in Ceylon. She hoped I would

stay home for a while, as my brother visited us just before I started for New York."

"Have you any more brothers and sisters?" asked Mabel.

"No," he answered, sadly; "my sister died two years ago, the only one I had. She was just twenty years old. She was following the hounds. Her horse fell and rolled on her, crushing her life out. She was dead when they picked her up. Mother never has been the same."

"Oh, how dreadfully sad! She was just my age. Your mother must be very lonely without her sons."

"Yes, sometimes I feel so guilty and think I'll stay home. Then the roving feeling gets hold of me and I am off again. She never says, 'Don't go, Harry,' or perhaps I might stay home more. She always seemed to think everything of Sybil. We boys never seemed to have the hold on her affections that she did."

"Why, there's the dressing bell," said Mabel. "I must go and get ready for dinner."

"It's a shame you did not get a seat next to me, Miss Lloyd. Fairchild seems so serious."

"I find him pleasant enough," she said, as she went to her cabin.

As he looked after her he said to himself, "She's no end of a nice girl. Just the kind the Mater would like, too. It's time I was settling down." So saying, he went to make preparations for dinner.

On reaching his cabin, he took especial pains with his toilet, trying on several ties before he was satisfied with the effect. On making his appearance in the Saloon Fairchild noticed it. He, too, had taken extra care to make himself presentable, and was pleased that his friend could not take his place along side of Miss Lloyd. That was his privilege, his friend having a place at another table.

Fairchild was surprised at himself taking any interest in her, as up to a few days ago no one had a place in his thoughts but Esther. He grieved to think he had lost her, and felt he would never meet another girl like her. Yet here he was getting interested in Miss Lloyd already. He could not understand himself. He was not the kind to fall

easily in love, but could not conceal the fact from himself that he was happier in her company than in any one else's on board.

Several times during the meal he caught his friend glancing at Miss Lloyd. She was too busy talking to notice it, but Fairchild saw it, and wondered what interest he could have in her. Only one more day and they would have to part.

After lunch next day every one was busy counting on how soon they would meet their friends and relatives. A party of tourists on their first trip abroad were consulting their guides and one could hear nothing but snatches of conversation concerning the best way to view London Tower, Westminster Abbey, and so forth.

As the steamer entered the Channel the fog was so dense they had to lay to, as the Captain expressed it. This delay was unavoidable, and most of the passengers took it good-naturedly. Toward evening they were towed in. Before reaching the dock cards and addresses were exchanged.

Fairchild and his friend promised to call on Miss Lloyd at her home. They had hardly time to wish her good bye when she was whisked off by her father and mother, who were overjoyed at her safe arrival. She told them all she had seen and what a delightful time she had. Her mother watched her closely for any slips in her pronunciation or traces of slang; but finding none, gave herself up with satisfaction to listen to the account of her voyage home. She told her parents of her meeting with the two gentlemen passengers, and of her inviting them to call and meet her father and mother.

"I could hardly do less, mamma, when they were so kind to me."

"You did right," said her father; "always be courteous to those who are kind to you. Never forget, Mabel, to thank every one; even if the service is ever so slight always be polite. Remember that politeness is something with everybody, and with some people it's every thing. We are too apt to take little kindnesses as our due."

Fairchild and his friend went to the hotel, his friend's

home being several miles from London. He urged Fairchild to make his home with him, but he preferred to remain at the hotel until the time for sailing to Ceylon. They arranged to visit each other often.

Next morning his friend left for his home, and Fairchild put in his time sight-seeing, but found it heavy work alone. He was just on the point of going off in the country somewhere when he met the tourist party that came over with him. In sheer desperation he joined them, and managed to extract considerable amusement from their comments on the Tower and other show places he visited with them.

He returned to the hotel wondering what he would do next, when a messenger presented him with a card, saying the lady was in the reception-room.

Entering the room, he found his friend.

"Did you get the mater's card?"

"Yes, just now."

"Well, come and I'll introduce you to her. Mother, this is my friend, Fairchild."

She extended her hand in greeting and expressed her pleasure at meeting her son's friend.

"The object of my visit was to invite you to our home. I know London must prove lonesome to you here alone. Nothing would please us more than to have you stay with us until the time for the steamer's departure."

"You'd better give in, Fairchild. Mother always stays with a fellow until he does what she wants him to."

"I would be delighted to accept your hospitality, Mrs. Nelson, but it seems like an imposition."

"Say no more, please, Mr. Fairchild, but come with us now."

He thanked her graciously, grateful for the interest she had taken in him.

It took them but a short time to go to the train, and soon they were speeding into the country, passing fragrant hawthorn hedges, beautiful trees and green fields, stopping at last at a wayside station, where they alighted and were driven to the Nelson home.

Although Fairchild had frequently visited England, this view of rural scenery was entirely new to him.

The Nelson home was in a charming spot reached by a drive through a long shady lane. The house itself was nestled among the trees and surrounded by large lawns and shrubberies.

"What an ideal place," thought Fairchild. "I could live here forever, far from the noise and turmoil of city life."

He was aroused from his thoughts by the carriage stopping. They entered the house and were ushered into an immense hall, which had an inviting looking fire burning brightly at the end of it. There was something homelike about it that captivated Fairchild at once.

Seated in a large armchair, at one side of the fireplace, was Mr. Nelson, a semi-invalid, who welcomed Fairchild cordially and bade him make himself thoroughly at home. There was no need for this injunction, for he felt that way the instant he entered the house. It was an ideal English country home, one that was always open for hospitality to the family friends.

Harry felt pleased to have his friend welcomed so warmly. Fairchild never remembered spending such a delightful visit anywhere.

"We, with all our money, have not yet learned the true meaning of home," he thought. He recalled the many elegant mansions of his friends at home, with their beautiful furnishings and expensive appointments. Yet this air of hospitality was lacking, this air which he found in so many English homes of less pretension.

Harry and he spent their time riding, hunting and in various ways. They then decided it would be about time to call on Miss Lloyd.

Mrs. Nelson knew of the family through some friends of hers, but did not know them personally, but had heard them spoken of very highly.

They planned to go next day and call, but could not return until the following evening.

On arriving at the home, they found Miss Lloyd busy romping with two magnificent St. Bernard dogs. She ran

forward to meet them with outstretched hands, overjoyed at seeing them again. She took them inside and introduced them to her father and mother.

"Mamma," she said, "these are the gentlemen who were so kind to me on the steamer."

Her parents gave them a hearty welcome and insisted on their remaining over night, much to Mabel's delight.

Mr. Lloyd told them of some friends near by who knew the Nelsons.

"We must have them over this evening," he said, looking toward his wife.

"Certainly," she said. "I can send word to them."

"Do so, my dear," her husband answered. "I know it would please them to meet Mrs. Nelson's son."

Toward evening a messenger was dispatched to the friend's house. They came, glad of a chance to hear from their old friends, the Nelsons.

The evening passed only too quick. Mabel was in the best of spirits. She had missed her friends and was pleased to think they had not forgotten her and their promise to call.

Next afternoon they left, wishing them all good bye, as they expected to leave in a few days for Ceylon.

On his return to the Nelson's Fairchild wrote to Tom, telling of his arrival in England, and promising to write again when they came to the end of their journey.

Mrs. Nelson could hardly bear the thought of Harry leaving them so soon again.

"My dear boy," his father said, "I wish you would settle down. You have travelled and seen more now than most young men of your age, and it's about time you gave it up, at least for the present. Your mother and I are getting old and would like to have you near us in our old age."

"All right, dad," said Harry. "After this trip I'll stay with you both all the time. I know the mater feels uneasy all the time I am gone, but rest assured, I'll keep out of danger always for her sake."

"Well, my boy, continue to do so. We will go up to

London with you to-morrow and stay there until the steamer leaves."

Mrs. Nelson felt grieved to lose her son so soon again, but hoped after this trip he would be satisfied to stay home.

On the following day they all went to London and put in their spare time showing Mr. Fairchild many places of interest that he had never even heard of. This pleased him very much. He appreciated their kindness to him in making him one of the family. He was sorry to part from them, but as their passages were secured he was obliged to say good bye to them. He thanked them over and over for their hospitality to him.

The last farewells were spoken, and as the steamer cast off from the dock, Mrs. Nelson could control her grief no longer, and was led off by her husband to the train which took them to their home.

"I do wish," she said, "Harry would settle down and marry some nice girl and stay near us."

"Well, Mary, her husband replied, "he promised me only yesterday he would remain at home after this voyage."

"I am so glad to hear that," she answered. "If I could only have some one to take Sybil's place, it would make it easier for me to bear."

"Well, he will probably find one, and bring you another daughter to love and care for you."

"If he does, my heart will go out to her, and I will endeavor to make her life as happy as I hoped Sybil's to be," she said with fervor.

The days were very lonesome for them. Harry's visit was so short, he was gone before they realized they had him back.

His brother George had gone to Ceylon and bought a tea plantation there. He was back only once in the five years since he left. He returned to marry a young lady he had known from childhood and took her off to Ceylon, much to the disappointment of his parents, who were very much attached to his wife, she having been playmate and friend to Sybil since their infancy. Now that Sybil was

gone, she longed to have George's wife back to comfort her, but their home was there, and she had given up all hope of that now, but wished for Harry to remain with them so they would not be entirely alone in their old age.

Harry and Fairchild were well on their way by now. There was an unusually large number of passengers, most of them being British Army officers and their wives on their way to Bombay. One sturdy old general was accompanied by a dissipated looking man, who Fairchild found out several days later was none other than the Duke of Pembroke, whom he was taking into the army in hopes that the discipline and life would reform, strengthen and make a man of him instead of the wreck he was now.

Fairchild knew of his visit to America and the life he led while there, but had never met him, as he was abroad at the time. To him it seemed strange to see a man, that evidently had the advantages he must have had, sink so low. But, on talking it over with the general, who told him about the family, he ceased to wonder at it.

"By Gad," said the general, "what are our aristocracy coming to! Here's the Pembroke family, which ran down a long line of noble ancestors, now come to a standstill! This young man's great grandfather was commander of the Army and distinguished himself on numberless occasions by his bravery. His grandfather was an illustrious statesman, a man of unblemished character, whose eloquence stirred the whole country every time he spoke in Parliament. His own father, living on the reputation of his sire, gave himself up to every indulgence, finally marrying a chorus girl, as the wind up of a great spree. And this," he said, pointing to the drowsy duke, "is the result of the union. Is it any wonder that the finger of scorn is pointed at him? And the trouble is we get no credit, sir, for the noble line of men we produce, because such specimens, as our friend here, are constantly in evidence. Look around you on this deck at the fine intelligent band of men—officers of our army. It's occupation, sir, at some kind of work that brings out the good that's in us. If we don't occupy our hands and brains, our best qualities sink in us, and

the worst that's in our natures rises to the top and rules our lives. Is it not so, my friend? Don't you find the same conditions confronting you on your side of the water?"

Fairchild could not deny that this was so.

"Yes," continued the general, "our men must give up this useless kind of existence and make a name for themselves and not live on some one else's reputation. If I had a dozen sons and a million apiece for them, I'd make soldiers or business men of every one of them sooner than see them degenerate. The world needs good men in all walks of life more than it ever did. The abuse of money is what causes this state of things," continued the general. "This necessary commodity is wrongly used. It causes the undoing and not the uplifting of man, as it ought to. Now don't misunderstand me, moneyed men are needed and always will be for the army of wage earners who need their assistance. But no man ought to allow himself to sink into a nonentity in the community in which he lives. Every man ought to be a 'prop,' so to speak, to hold up some principle for the betterment of mankind in general. Why, where would we drift to if all our men lived this kind of life, like our friend here has been doing? Why, sir," went on the general, "we would be a mass of wreckage in no time. Well, well, here I am talking myself into a state of excitement over things I can't remedy. But, changing the subject, where are you going to get off at, Mr. Fairchild?"

"Ceylon is my destination. I am going to visit young Nelson's brother. He has a tea plantation there."

"I know him," said the general. "He often visits the garrison. He has some sort of a relative in the Army. His head is level. Everybody drinks tea these days, and you are sure of a market for your product. Give the world the necessities of life and you'll make money. Well, sir, I must take a look at my charge." So saying, he walked off.

Fairchild began to think over the general's conversation. It made a deep impression on him, especially as he was doing no particular good as he went along, and was not any kind of a prop, as the general put it.

"What good was he in any community?" he thought, and decided then and there to lead a more industrious life and make some use of the wealth he was fortunate enough to inherit. He would enter some way into the life of whatever place he settled down in.

"Esther would have been just the girl to start a fellow right," he thought. But that was out of the question now. "Miss Lloyd is a delightful and lovable girl, too, but whether I would have any chance alongside of Nelson I don't know. I always seem to meet a girl that some one else wants too. Well, all I can do is to try and win her. She had taken a hold on my affections already, although I know she is not aware of it."

The more he thought of her, the more he felt convinced that she was just the girl to make a man happy if he was fortunate to win her. From that time on she occupied his mind constantly.

Nelson, in the meantime, had succumbed to the charms of a beautiful young girl who was on her way to Ceylon to join her parents. She was just out of school, having been sent to England to finish her education. He appeared to be hopelessly in love with her, much to the satisfaction of Fairchild, who was actually falling in love with the absent Mabel Lloyd, and was glad to see his friend getting out of the race.

For the rest of the voyage Fairchild was almost deserted by Nelson, so enamored was he with his charmer. He never left her side, for fear of any one else taking his place. She seemed just as infatuated as he was, much to the amusement of the rest of the passengers, who had no end of fun at their expense. Both being young, they paid no attention to it, but continued on in mute admiration of each other independent of what their fellow passengers thought.

Mr. Fairchild rather envied him in having his inamorata so near to him, while his own affair was as yet a day-dream of romance, which he hoped some day would be realized. There was nothing for him to do but dream on until the time would come when the dream would be-

come a reality. He spent many pleasant hours listening to the general's discussion on things in general. The latter, being a deep thinker and man of the world, one who observed closely all that was continually passing before his critical eyes, he naturally proved a most interesting companion. Being a good talker, he brought out the fine points to advantage. His conversation proved so instructive that Fairchild was loath to let him go, as he did so often to talk with his fellow officers, he being an all round favorite with every one on board, especially the elderly spinster who giggled spasmodically every time he spoke to her, and tapped him playfully on the cheek with her fan, saying, "General, you're so funny," much to the evident amusement of the grizzled warrior.

She was a source of constant wonder to him. Her kittenish ways and simpering manner seemed so out of place with her sparse gray hair and furrowed cheeks. Youth dies hard in some people. She was one of those who fought heroically against the ravages of time and tried to be youthful in spite of the occasional twinges of pain her rheumatism caused her. She was going to India, she said, as she had heard of a wonderful Brahmin who could restore the aged to youth by mere incantations and mysterious and weird rites. She firmly believed it to be so. The general tried to show her the folly of it, but nothing would turn her from the purpose. She had met an Indian prince in England who had told her of the wonderful feat of restoration he had performed. She would tell this all to the general in a confidential way, which caused him to remark many a time:

"The fools are like the poor, always with us. It's no wonder the world is so full of fakirs, when the dupes are so plentiful. Ah, well, it takes all kinds of people to make a world. So what does it matter if one-half have to live off the other half. They have to live somehow, and I suppose, in their opinion, one way is as good as another."

The steamer was now nearing Bombay, and the contingent of officers and their wives were preparing to land. As they came into the harbor, there seemed to be a feeling

of genuine regret among the remaining passengers to see them go. They had made themselves so agreeable. As they had many fine musicians among them, they would be missed all the more for the pleasure they had given. But, as the general remarked, "Duty before pleasure."

He was anxious to get into harness again, as he called it. "We must keep drilled every day if we wish to keep up our proficiency in the field." As soon as the steamer was moored alongside the wharf, the passengers gave three hearty cheers for the general as he walked up the gang plank. There being considerable cargo to unload, the remaining passengers had a chance to go on shore and look at the city.

The Brahma Temples were a novel sight to most of them, and the motley crowd of Hindoos, Mohammedans and Parsees were an interesting as well as an unfamiliar experience.

After purchasing many curios in the shape of carved teakwood, ivory and beautiful embroidery, they re-embarked and were soon on their way to Ceylon.

Young Nelson fairly loaded his lady love with beautiful gifts. If she admired anything, he would dart into the store instantly and purchase it regardless of the cost. She fairly had to drag him back to the steamer, or, as she said, he would not have the price of a meal left in his pocket.

It left a great vacancy among the cabin passengers when the officers and their wives left. It took some time to adjust things again, but as they were so near the end of their journey it seemed hardly worth while.

Mr. Fairchild was anxious to get there. He was getting tired of the long voyage. But young Nelson was like Tennyson's brook, he could go on forever.

It delighted him to think that Elsie would live in Ceylon. He could see her often. He intended, the very first thing on landing, to ask her parents' permission to marry her.

Fairchild was amused at his rapturous description of her beauty and lovely disposition, as if he had not been for weeks looking at her every day, watching the process with double interest, as it left him a clear field for Mabel Lloyd.

It was doubtful if Nelson thought of her after the first day out. He was very impressionable. Every pretty face attracted him, but this time his love making was unusually violent, and lasted longer than was customary for him. He had met his affinity at last, he told Fairchild. All the others were just passing fancies. He would go off into ecstatic descriptions of her many and wonderful virtues on the slightest provocation, until Fairchild pronounced it to be getting positively tiresome.

"Well, old man," said Nelson, "you'll know how it feels some of these days to be desperately in love."

"I doubt if I shall lose my head like you are doing," laughingly answered Fairchild. "I think the sea air is too much for you, Harry; it's too exhilarating."

"Oh, it's Elsie. She would turn any fellow's brain," said Harry. "I am so happy I hardly know myself."

"Well, I am sure I don't know you," said Fairchild. "If I had seen this side of your character, I doubt if I would have asked to accompany you."

"Oh, Fairchild, you're not sorry you came, are you?"

"No, indeed; I am glad. It's the most pleasant sea voyage I have ever had. A little long, perhaps; but, I suppose, if I had an Elsie it would be far too short."

"That's it," said Harry. "I do wish you could find a girl to love. You don't know what you are missing, Fairchild."

"Well, I am content," said the latter, "to watch your happiness. I am too sober to ever lose my head, I think."

"Don't be too sure of it, Fairchild. A fellow never knows what he will do until he gets there."

"I suppose not," answered Fairchild, dryly.

He could not picture himself, no matter how deeply in love, doing as young Nelson was.

"Of course," he thought, "I might do it, but I have my doubts. I never was of an excitable nature. Things always came to me so easy. I just took them as a matter of course, and never knew the pleasure of expectation."

Next evening they were able to see the lights of the City of Colombo on the west coast of the island. Part of

the city being built on a rocky promontory, the lights could be seen quite a distance off. As they entered the harbor next morning they could distinguish the forts that defended it, and the walls and great ditch with its drawbridges.

This first glance at the island pleased Fairchild. He saw now it was going to be a very interesting place to visit.

Harry saw nothing, so absorbed was he with Elsie, until Fairchild drew his attention to the odd looking boats in which the natives were paddling about the harbor, a native stationed at each end of the boat.

Harry cast a swift glance at them, but that was all. This amused Fairchild, who said to himself, "I don't believe he will ever reach the tea plantations. He told me it was three miles out of town; and if Miss Elsie lives in town, which I presume she does, if he ever gets there, it will be by main force."

The steamer drew up along side the wharf and the passengers began to disembark. Elsie's father and mother, a handsome, dignified couple, met her, and bore her off, leaving a native servant to attend to her luggage.

Harry had hardly time to exchange greetings in response to his introduction. He had her address, to be sure, and would be able to call on her at her home, but he never thought of her being taken away from him in such a rush.

He looked lovingly after her and stood spellbound until some one called "Gangway!" This brought him to his senses, and he began to gather up his traps. Fairchild had all his in readiness some time before.

"Well, Harry," he said, "let us go to the hotel and get our baggage sent up there."

"All right," said Harry, dreamily.

They entered a waiting carriage and were driven at a fast rate to the hotel. Fairchild had to attend to everything. Harry seemed to be almost in a state of collapse from his parting from Elsie.

"Come, Nelson, wake up," said Fairchild. "You'll see her again. Lunch will soon be ready, and we had better brush up a little for it."

They started for their rooms, and later, on entering the

dining-room, Harry was transported with joy by seeing Elsie, with her father and mother, seated at a table waiting for lunch. He immediately walked over to them and was invited to sit with them.

"Bring your friend over to our table," they said cordially.

But as the table only held four, Fairchild decided to stay where he was.

Harry was soon on the best of footing with Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, Elsie's parents, who seemed to take quite a fancy to his boyish enthusiasm.

After lunch, having received an invitation to call and bring his friend next evening, he wished them good bye, casting a loving look after them. He heaved a deep sigh and said, "Good bye, Elsie, until to-morrow night."

He came back to Fairchild's table and told him of the invitation. "And what do you suppose?" he said excitedly. "Mr. Nichols has a plantation joining George's. Was there ever anything so fortunate? When Elsie left they lived in town. She was a little girl and did not remember much about the place. Her parents came every year to England to visit her while she was in boarding school. They seem to think there never was a girl like her, and, bah Jove! Fairchild, I think they are right, too. I never saw one like her before myself," said Harry.

Fairchild felt like reminding him of other girls he had thought just as perfect, but, to be sure, he never went into such ecstasies over them as he did over Elsie.

The next evening took a long time to come, according to Harry, but it did eventually arrive, and he and Fairchild went to call on Mr. and Mrs. Nichols. They were graciously received by Mrs. Nichols, who apologized for Elsie's absence.

"My neighbor here has not seen her for seven years, and she begged so hard that I let her run over there. She will be back in about an hour."

It was a long hour to Harry. At every sound he expected to see her come into the room. But it was almost an hour and a half before she came.

She welcomed them gaily, and drew up a footstool by Harry, and soon they were in oblivion as far as any one else was concerned.

She told him they were going out to the plantation for a week. "You know father likes to live in town, and mother likes it best in the country. So we will stay part of the time in each place. Your friend says you are going to your brother's to-morrow."

"Yes; George is coming after us."

"Come, Elsie," her father called out, "show Mr. Fairchild those trophies of mine."

"Yes, father," she answered.

"You must go elephant hunting with me some day," he said, addressing Fairchild. "It's rare sport. Of course there's a spice of danger to it, and one has to keep a sharp lookout; but on the whole it's most exciting. It needs considerable strategy to wound one of those monsters. They seem to understand our movements so well and are ready for us at every turn. You have to keep a careful lookout, or they will get you before you get them."

After having talked for a long time over the various animals found there to hunt Fairchild concluded it was time to be going. So wishing their host and hostess good night, he and Nelson returned to the hotel. When they reached there they found a message for Harry, saying his brother would be there in the morning.

Fairchild rose early and made a visit to some of the stores, bought some views, curios and little trinkets, going back to the hotel for breakfast. He devoted the rest of the time to writing. He wrote Tom a long letter telling of his voyage and so forth and sent him and Esther some views and curios. Then he made up a package and addressed it to Miss Lloyd. He started several letters to her, but tore them up, as none of them suited him. He was afraid of offending her if he wrote too affectionately, and the more formal ones did not appeal to him. At last he managed to write one that met his approval. So sealing it he started out to find the post office. On getting back to the hotel he found Harry and his brother waiting for him.

George Nelson proved a very jovial fellow, but Fairchild hesitated about foisting himself on him. He intended to make the trip with Harry, but not to impose on his brother's hospitality. The latter would not have it that way, but insisted on his coming to his home with Harry, and never stopped his request until Fairchild acquiesced.

The drive out to the plantation, though short, was very enjoyable. The jungle they passed through before reaching the plantation surprised Fairchild. The vegetation and trees were all so different from anything he had ever seen, and naturally being somewhat of a botanist, he was anxious to examine them. His host assured him he would find many things in that line to interest him.

"It was a source of never-ending wonder to me at first, and even yet I often find new specimens. Ah," he said, "here we are," as a native opened the gate and he drove down the long avenue to his home.

His wife was on the veranda to greet them, expressing her pleasure at meeting Mr. Fairchild.

"You will hardly believe me when I tell you that you are the first real American I ever met."

"Well," laughed Fairchild, "I hope I won't prove too ferocious."

"On the contrary," she said, "I have always had the greatest admiration for your country and its people."

"Thank you," said Fairchild.

They all went into the dining-room, where an appetizing lunch was spread. Seating themselves, they ate with apparent relish all before them.

"How is it," said Harry, "a home meal always tastes so good."

"Oh, you're just hungry, that's why you think it tastes better," said his sister-in-law.

They fell to discussing the passengers and the voyage out.

"Say," said Harry, "do you know the Nichols?"

"Why, yes," said his brother. "They own the next plantation. Why do you ask?"

"Well, their daughter came out with us."

"Did she?" said Mrs. Nelson. "What does she look like?"

"Perfectly lovely," said Harry, enthusiastically. "You never saw such beautiful hair, and eyes—why they are just like stars, her eyes are, only brighter."

"Why, Harry," laughed his brother, "you've got it bad." Turning to Fairchild, he said, "Is she so angelic?"

The latter smiled and said she was a beautiful girl and extremely attractive.

"That's right," said Harry. "I see you do know a pretty girl when you see her. You will never see another like her."

Fairchild's mind wandered back to Mabel Lloyd, who in his estimation was every bit as attractive.

"Well," said George, "we will have plenty of chances to judge her beauty, as they are going to come out here next week. Mr. Nichols was just waiting until his daughter arrived from England. She will be company for you, Geraldine," said George, addressing his wife. "I know you have been lonesome at times here among strangers."

"No, George," she answered, "I have been very happy, but—of course, I will be glad to have a girl friend again, especially as she is so wonderfully beautiful," she said, as she cast a mischievous glance at Harry.

"You'll find her no end of a jolly girl. Just your sort, Geraldine—plays tennis and golf, sings and paints and I don't know what else. Just fresh from boarding school. I'm going to see her to-night."

"Why, Harry," said his brother, "that's a nice way to treat us after coming so far to visit us—to run off the first evening."

"But I must see her," answered Harry. "She will not know what to make of me if I forget her so soon. I expect you felt that way about Geraldine, didn't you?"

"Well," laughed his brother, "go ahead. We are all alike, I suppose, when we fall in love."

Fairchild was in his glory now. He spent days at a time botanizing the plant life of the island. He found several new varieties of ferns and plants hitherto unknown, making quite a name for himself among the botanists.

One evening, on returning from a long tramp in the jungle, he met Harry hurrying up the avenue.

"What do you suppose has happened," he exclaimed, as he reached Fairchild.

"Something terrible, I should judge from your looks."

"Yes," said Harry; "I went over to-day to see Elsie, and she was off riding with some officer, a friend of her father's; and I am nearly distracted. I have not seen her since last night, and there's no telling where that fool man will take her. He doesn't know the country a bit and may run into some wild animals."

"Keep cool, Harry; that fool man, as you call him, knows every foot of the place better than you do. So don't excite yourself."

"If I only knew she was safe! It serves me right for letting her out of my sight."

Toward evening the Nichols came over and with them was Elsie looking radiant in her blue swiss dress, none the worse for her ride.

"You don't know what a relief it is to me to know you are safe back," said Harry.

"Why!" exclaimed Elsie.

"Well, I did not know where that fellow would take you; and there are so many wild animals round through the jungle."

Elsie laughed heartily. "Why, you old goose, we only went to the post office to mail some letters for father and never met any animal more formidable than a cat, which was leisurely crossing the street.

Thus reassured, Harry was himself again, but he made up his mind to find out the state of her feelings for him. He never could let any one else step in and take her away from him.

During the evening he managed to see her alone, and found his affections were returned. She told him, among other things only meant for his ears, that she could not exist without him; he was as necessary to her as the air she breathed. All of which sent Harry into ecstasies.

"I'll call and see your father, Elsie, darling, to-morrow. I don't suppose he will place any obstacles in the way."

"No," said Elsie, "I'm positive he won't."

While Harry and Elsie were thus engaged, Fairchild and her father were discussing elephant hunting, a sport Fairchild knew absolutely nothing about, but was extremely anxious to try.

It was decided to make arrangements with some experienced natives to guide them into the parts of the jungle where they herded. As that would take some time to do, Mr. Nichols offered to take him with him next day to hunt jungle bear.

They would in all probability be gone several weeks, the best hunting being in the southern part of the island.

These bears are very sensitive to heat, and during the hottest part of the day they lay in self-dug holes. The hunter rouses them out of these and forces them out on the dry mountainous plateaus and waits until they are pretty well exhausted by the heat before attacking them. They are extremely dangerous when wounded.

Harry did not wish to join them. In the first place, he neither knew nor cared anything about hunting, and in the next place, he could not stay that long from Elsie. So he declined their invitation to join the expedition.

Mr. Nichols' going off hunting gave Harry no chance to interview him or ask permission to marry Elsie. But as he had her consent, it did not worry him. They were satisfied to wait until his return.

Mrs. Nichols and Mrs. Nelson were very much amused at the two ardent wooers, but, as nothing could possibly be said against Harry, he being a young man of good character, it was only his buoyant youth that was in evidence. Time would settle that. His boyish enthusiasm would eventually give way to a maturer manliness in a few years.

Elsie was the same, full of girlish ecstasies. Young and just out of school, everything was novel and amusing to her. She was bright and intelligent and would develop into an excellent woman in time.

Every one could see these two young people were adapted in every way to each other, and smiled on their ardent love-making, which they knew time would change into a

strong and enduring affection, as they grew older. After all, they were only children, one might say, both young and inexperienced with the world before them.

They had a great deal yet to learn of the sad side of life. This comes to all, however protected. Death and sorrow is no respecter of persons. They come with the grim sickle and cut our happiness off when we least expect it. Youth is the time for happiness and pleasure. So let no one grudge it to them. Time flits away so rapidly that age overtakes them before they are hardly aware of it and youth is gone forever.

Mr. Nichols and Fairchild had an arduous time of it. The latter was not used to such heat, and was completely worn out climbing mountains. They hunted several days before getting a scent of a bear. At last one of their native servants spied one. Then the real work began. Fairchild forgot his weariness and trudged for hours after it.

Mr. Nichols, being an experienced hunter and accustomed to the climate, suffered no inconvenience, but poor Fairchild was fagged out.

Mr. Nichols got in the first shot, wounding the bear just enough to make it dangerous. It charged at them with all its fury. Fairchild shot but missed. This angered the bear still more, and with an ominous growl it advanced rapidly until it was almost upon him. He ran toward a tree, in utter ignorance that these bears can climb the highest one by reason of their enormous claws.

Just as Fairchild started to climb the tree, he felt the bear's heavy paw on him, as a shot from Mr. Nichols' rifle took effect in his shoulder, causing him to roll over. Seeing he was not yet dead, he fired a shot into his brain. With the assistance of a couple of natives he dragged it to one side, leaving it for them to skin, while he went to where Fairchild was lying. He found that he had fainted from fright. He turned him over and poured some stimulants down his throat, which revived him, and soon he was able to sit up, but was too exhausted to walk yet.

"Where is that awful beast?" he asked Mr. Nichols.

"Right there," said Mr. Nichols, pointing to the dead bear that the natives were skinning.

"Thank God he is dead," said Fairchild. "I never had such a fright in my life."

He gradually recovered and walked over to where the bear was. He was an enormous fellow, his claws being monstrous. These Mr. Nichols gave to Fairchild as a souvenir.

Later Mr. Nichols asked Fairchild jokingly if he wanted to hunt another bear.

"Indeed, I do not. The quicker we get back to camp, the better it will please me. One bear is my limit."

As Fairchild wanted no more bear hunting, they broke camp and left for home, bringing the fine bear skin with them. The family were rather surprised to see them return so soon, but on hearing of Fairchild's narrow escape, were thankful they were back.

Elsie was overjoyed to think Harry did not go.

"It would have been terrible if a bear should get him from you, wouldn't it?" said George teasingly.

"I don't intend to give him up to any one, much less a jungle bear."

Fairchild was undecided about elephant hunting, but Mr. Nichols reassured him.

"You can come as a spectator and watch us and see how it's done. But there's time enough yet. You'll want to take part in it, I know. We will rest up first."

A few days after this Harry made a special call on Mr. Nichols and formally asked for permission to marry Elsie.

"Well, my boy, I don't know what to say. You and Elsie are rather young to take such responsibility. I have no objection to you, only on that score. You're pretty young, aren't you, to take care of a wife?"

"Elsie trusts me, sir."

"Of course she does. But what do a pair of youngsters like you know about starting housekeeping? I like you first-rate, Harry," said Mr. Nichols, "and have no objection to your being engaged, but I think you had better wait a while before you think of marrying."

"All right, sir, just as you say."

"Well spoken, Harry. I'll put you on probation. Eh, how would that suit you?"

"Fine," said Harry. "Thank you for trusting me. I will try to prove worthy of your confidence."

"Do, my boy; that's all I'll ask of you, and feel my confidence has not been misplaced."

As Harry took his leave of Mr. Nichols, and was going out the door, Elsie called him back.

"What did father say?" she asked excitedly.

"He says he has no objection to me."

"How could he? You're just lovely," said Elsie.

"But," continued Harry, "he would rather we did not marry just yet. He thinks we had better wait a while."

"Do you think so?" queried Elsie.

"Yes, I think it's better to do as he says."

"You're right, Harry. You always are."

"Wasn't it nice of your father to act so. Some fathers would have been so grumpy."

"I'll just give him a good kiss for that."

"You better give me one first," said Harry. "I'm entitled to it now."

He took it without waiting for her consent.

"Now I must write to the mater," said Harry. "She will be tickled to death to think I am going to settle down. But wait until she sees you, Elsie. Why, she will just love you to death."

As soon as Harry returned to the plantation he announced his engagement. They all heartily congratulated him on winning such a lovely girl.

"Harry, you must stay here with us," said George.

"I'd like to, but I promised father and mother I'd stay near them after this trip."

"Yes," said George, "that's right. We musn't both leave them. I always felt guilty going so far from home. We must go back and see them before long. Geraldine would like to see her people, too, I know. It will do us both good to make the trip."

"Why couldn't Harry bring his bride along?" said Geraldine.

"That would be capital," said Harry.

"I'll lay the matter before Elsie to-night and see how it strikes her."

From the time of his engagement, the family saw very little of Harry, only at meal times, and that not very often. The Nichols took quite a fancy to him, much to Elsie's delight. They were not prepared to give her up too soon, but promised Harry in a year's time, if they both felt the same toward one another, as they did now, they would give their consent to their marriage.

This was perfectly satisfactory to the young people. They were to be at perfect liberty to see all they wished of each other. Neither of them neglected the latter part of the agreement. They never lost any opportunity to carry it out whenever they had a chance.

Mr. Fairchild, having quite recovered from his fright, was ready to go elephant hunting now. To be sure, he was not so enthusiastic, but determined not to be lacking in grit. When the time came, he realized that hunting big game was far different from his only experience of hunting, which consisted of hunting wild birds mainly. However, he was willing to try, even if it turned out like his bear hunt.

Everything being now ready, they started out with a native guide to where the latter had located a herd of elephants. Being on horseback they did not suffer the hardships they did bear hunting. Riding through the dense woods and jungle proved very tiring to both man and beast. On the fourth day out, the guide returned to camp informing them that a herd was not more than a mile distant.

Mr. Nichols was all excitement; it was old sport to him, and the thought of the elephants being so near quickened his pulse. He was eager to be off. Fairchild caught some of his spirit and was anxious to go, too.

They had only ridden a few yards when they were startled by the loud trumpeting of the herd. Fairchild's blood ran cold. He shuddered at the prospect of a fierce battle with them, but was determined not to show the white feather.

"They are not more than a half mile off," said Mr. Nichols.

Fairchild thought by the noise they were right on them. This reassured him, and as he rode on behind Mr. Nichols through the jungle he endeavored to catch a glimpse of them.

Mr. Nichols saw a huge beast coming toward them.

"Now, Fairchild, here's our chance. Get ready. Remember what I told you about the shoulder shot."

But Fairchild could see nothing but an enormous mass of bulky flesh, with large, flapping ears, which from time to time rose in the air like immense fans. It was all Fairchild could do to keep his nerve. But he bravely followed Mr. Nichols, crashing on through brambles and weeds. Several times his horse was on the point of stumbling. It was here his excellent horsemanship came into play. He managed to get along without an accident.

"He's a magnificent specimen," said Mr. Nichols, alluding to the elephant. "Look at his tusks. We must get him," said Mr. Nichols enthusiastically. "Get your gun into position, Fairchild, lose no time, we are almost upon him."

The elephant realized his danger, and with a deafening roar charged on them. Mr. Nichols fired first, wounding the beast, who now became infuriated and rushed toward them.

"Fire! Fairchild, fire quick, into the shoulder. I will aim between his eyes."

Both shots took effect, but not where they supposed they aimed. The maddened beast plunged forward; both men turned their horses sideways with a quick movement.

The impetus took the huge beast beyond them. They leveled their guns again and fired simultaneously. The animal advanced toward them for a few feet, then tottered and fell. He rose again, staggered for a few steps, fell again, a quivering mass of flesh. A few convulsive movements of the body and all was still.

Dismounting, they advanced cautiously, Mr. Nichols calling to the natives. They prodded him, and on finding that

life was extinct, removed his tusks, which they carried back to camp. They were both pretty well exhausted, but eager to try it again.

Fairchild, having recovered his nerve, felt roused to action. It was a new experience to him. It exhilarated him and made the blood course through his veins with a vigor that surprised him. He knew he would race the next one with a braver and steadier hand. But the herd had disappeared and after several days' fruitless search, they turned their horses homeward.

Fairchild really enjoyed this hunt; it was novel and, as Mr. Nichols said, it had a spice of danger in it which gave it zest.

They moved slowly toward home, and on arriving there were congratulated on their luck, the tusks being unusually large.

Mr. Fairchild generously forfeited his share to Mr. Nichols. The latter would not accept, but Fairchild insisted that they were rightly his. After a little good-natured wrangling, he accepted them, thanking Fairchild warmly for his generosity and said they would be pleasant reminders of their hunting trip.

The next day was mail day, always a cause for great excitement. They would now hear from their friends in England.

Fairchild hoped to hear from Mabel. "At least she will thank me for the package," he thought. He was not disappointed, as a long letter came from her, telling of her pleasure at being remembered by him with such beautiful gifts.

This opened a correspondence which ended in an avowal of love by Fairchild. He had hard work to keep at ease until the answer came. When it did, he hardly knew what to think. Mabel said nothing of her own feelings toward him, but said her parents felt she ought to know more of him and his character before they could think of placing her in his care for life. They also would like to see more of him before giving their consent.

He answered it, asking for her own feelings regarding him. He was willing to come back to England and give

her parents a satisfactory account of himself and family connections, if she felt any love for him, or was willing to marry him.

After this was forwarded he was easier in his mind and yet doubted if she really did care for him; she surely would have expressed it, if she did, he thought. However, there was nothing to do but wait until he heard something more definite.

He eventually received her answer confessing her love for him, but explained that she was taught from childhood to respect her parents' wishes first in every thing, and that was why she ignored her own feelings. But now that they were willing to allow her to accept him, she had no hesitation in admitting her love for him.

This delighted Fairchild so much, he wanted to leave for England at once. But as there was no steamer going for several days, he had to control his impatience.

When he announced his intention of leaving them all, they expressed their sincere regret, but declared he must not leave Ceylon without first ascending Adam's Peak. It would never do to come so far and then fail to visit one of the island's main attractions. They planned to make the ascent the following day. It was quite a feat. After a wearisome walk they started to ascend.

The mountain is so steep that the mode of ascent is difficult. A chain is securely fastened at the top, and this aids you to climb it. Yet with all this difficulty, many others were making the ascent too.

At the top is a rock on which is supposed to be a footprint, but you have to draw on your imagination pretty strongly to associate it with a foot, it is so immense. The Buddhists claim it is a footprint left by Buddha when he stepped from Ceylon to Siam. But the Mohammedans argue it was made by Adam when he was driven out of the Garden of Eden. This is where it gets the name of Adam's Peak, whatever caused it, one of the attractions which everyone not too nervous wants to see.

On their return they all stopped at Mr. Nichols' for dinner.

Next day Fairchild began to gather up his belongings

preparatory to returning to England, the steamer having arrived on which he would make the return trip.

By the mail he received a letter from Tom full of hope. Mr. Pemberton was still obdurate, but unable to explain why. So Esther and he were obliged to be very careful for fear of stirring up his wrath.

"What an extraordinary man," thought Fairchild. "There's not a finer fellow than Tom anywhere. What objection he can possibly have to him is beyond my comprehension. Tom is everything that I would want in a friend or brother, and he certainly has proved it."

The day came for his departure. The whole family came to see him off.

"Say, Fairchild," said Harry, "go and see the mater and tell her all about Elsie and what a darling she is."

"All right," said Fairchild, "I'll call on her and give Elsie a good send off, as we Americans say."

"Isn't that lovely of him," exclaimed Elsie, as she looked lovingly at Harry.

"All aboard!" shouted the chief officer. And as the vessel steamed away from the wharf, they waved their handkerchiefs. Fairchild watched them fluttering in the breeze as the island rapidly receded from view.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOMeward BOUND.

The voyage to England was uneventful. There were many congenial people on board. But Fairchild only cared to reach the end of the journey. It had no charms for him. The elderly spinster was returning home. She was delighted to see Fairchild again. They spent many hours on deck together. She amused him, and he felt he must talk to some one.

She entertained him with the news of her rejuvenation in mind and body.

"They have a marvellous power," she assured him.

But so far as her face went, the same old furrows were there, the tell-tale lines and crows' feet were still very much in evidence, but she was satisfied.

Whether the Brahmin blinded her to these blemishes, Fairchild did not know, but she evidently imagined that they had all disappeared and was happy in the supposition.

She made affectionate inquiries after Harry and Elsie, and when Fairchild told her that they were engaged to be married, she simpered and said, "We young girls feel so interested in one another. I often used to think of dear Elsie and wondered if her love was returned."

"You would not doubt it for an instant if you were with them as much as I was. I never saw such a love-sick pair," laughed Fairchild.

A few nights before reaching their destination there was a concert given in aid of the Seamen's Home. It was really wonderful the talent that was found among the passengers. Everyone that could was willing to do his or her share toward the entertainment.

"This is a kind old world, with all its faults," thought Fairchild. "There are always people willing to help the distressed in every land."

It was not many days after this that they sighted land.

Fairchild wondered how Mabel's parents would receive him. He had not the gusto of Harry's nature to help him. In fact, he felt rather timid now that he was so near them. But the knowledge of Mabel's love gave him courage enough to present himself before them.

As they neared the dock everything was all excitement. People hurried to and fro, carrying grips and suitcases.

An Englishman, with the inevitable bundle of canes and hat-box, seemed bewildered when he attempted to gather up his traps, and called lustily for his man, who had gone below to see to his numerous trunks.

"See here, me man, I cawn't attend to these things. Don't you know, you must take care of them all?"

"Very well, sir," answered the man, as he gathered up the numerous packages his master had accumulated during his visit to India, and loaded with them and a heavy over-

coat, laboriously went up the gang plank on to the dock, where he deposited them, while he returned for his master, much to everyone's amusement.

As soon as he landed, Fairchild hired a cab to take him to the hotel. Once there, he sent a telegram to Mabel, announcing his arrival.

Her father answered it, requesting him to remain at the hotel until he came to bring him to their home.

Fairchild had not expected this, but was pleased with the attention.

Mr. Lloyd greeted him cheerily, hurried him into a waiting cab, and as they drove toward his home questioned him about his trip, and was extremely interested in it.

Mabel and her mother were there to meet him as he alighted from the cab, and he soon felt at home among them.

Mabel had developed into a still handsomer girl during his absence, and, according to his judgment, more lovable than ever.

As soon as he was shown to his rooms he began to unpack his things, and when he entered the drawing-room half an hour later his hands were full of packages. He had brought gifts for the whole family, beautiful things such as Mabel only dreamed of but never expected to possess.

The more Mabel's parents saw of Fairchild the more they became reconciled to letting her marry him. They saw he had many fine qualities, and would make her a good, considerate husband. The only serious objection they had was his taking Mabel away so far. True, her uncle and aunt lived there, so she would not be among strangers, Fairchild having promised to make his home near them, in deference to Mabel's wishes.

Fairchild wrote to Mrs. Nelson, telling her all about her son and his wife and how splendidly they treated him; also of Harry's engagement, enlarging on Elsie's charms.

Mrs. Nelson wrote, thanking him for his thoughtfulness, and said she hoped soon to see him and hear more of Elsie.

Fairchild received word from his lawyer, saying considerable business had accumulated during his absence and

needed his attention. So he was obliged to shorten his visit.

He wished to take Mabel back with him, but her parents would not listen to it. They were not prepared to give her up so soon.

Before bidding them all good bye, he made a hasty visit to Mrs. Nelson, and left her wonderfully happy over the prospects of such an attractive daughter-in-law.

Fairchild, having given Elsie a good send off, as he expressed it, Harry would have been delighted with the account he gave of her beauty and loveliness of character, and, above all, her affection for Harry.

The latter pleased his mother most. She could not bear to think of her Harry not being appreciated.

After returning from his visit, he took leave of the Lloyd family and sailed for New York. He promised to return in six months and claim Mabel for his wife.

When Mabel met Fairchild on the trip over, she had no idea that he was a millionaire. In fact, she had formed no impression of him from a worldly viewpoint. To her he was just a congenial spirit that made the voyage home very enjoyable. She liked him from the first, but to love him had not yet entered into her thoughts. Her love for him was of a slower growth. That came when their correspondence ripened into friendship and later on, into love. This love had now become a power in her nature. She loved him with all her strength and felt the parting keenly.

In this nature they resembled each other very much, his love being also of a slow awakening. He now felt its intensity after parting from her, and longed for the time when he could return and claim her. He was tired of being what he called a homeless wanderer, and was anxious to settle down for good, now that he had found a congenial mate.

Mabel had become to him more than he ever thought any woman could. He felt he needed her companionship now that he had a claim on her, and longed for the time to come when their lives would blend together and they should become one.

The return voyage was anything but pleasant. They left England in a dense fog, which cleared away toward next evening, leaving a comparatively smooth sea. But, on the second day out, ominous black clouds could be seen gathering in the distance, then coming nearer and nearer, until a dark, dreary gloom seemed to settle over everything, although it was still daylight.

In about an hour's time from this the whole heavens seemed charged with electricity. Lightning flashed and thunder roared and rent the air with its vibrations, each peal appearing to be louder and more tremendous than the last.

This drove the passengers below. No one wished to face its terrors. Soon drops of rain came splashing on the deck, intermittent at first, but gradually gaining in strength and force until the clouds broke and the rain came down in torrents. The wind blew and whistled through the rigging and ropes, until it seemed as if all the fury of the heavens were let loose. This continued all night. Toward morning there was a lull, but it was only temporary.

The elements burst forth again in all their fury. The storm increased in intensity, until the sea seemed to be mountains high. The vessel rolled and pitched.

The captain ordered everything movable to be battened down. The portholes were all securely fastened.

The terror-stricken passengers were compelled to remain in their berths, walking being impossible to most of them, who were in the throes of sea-sickness, and at a stage where they cared little for the fierceness of the storm.

Thus the elements raged a royal battle for supremacy. The dismal howling of the wind, as it shrieked and moaned in the darkness and increased in intensity through the night, sent terror into the hearts of the passengers.

The vessel's staunch timbers creaked and strained as it tossed to and fro at the mercy of the waves and wind.

The storm raged for five days, gradually lessening in strength and violence, until at last it was spent.

The weary and frightened passengers realized then the awfulness of the tempest they had encountered, and longed

for the termination of the voyage and to be again in the safety of terra firma.

Several times during the storm Fairchild thought the vessel could not withstand such battering as the waves gave her as they tossed her about like a cork, as if she were a mere plaything in their hands.

No one was sorry when the captain announced at breakfast next morning after the storm that before night they would all have a chance to put their feet on solid ground again. Some of them registered a vow never again to take another ocean voyage, especially those who were getting their first experience of what wind and waves can do when the mighty hand of nature urges them on.

By afternoon most of them had recovered from the effects of fright and sea sickness. They presented rather a dejected appearance, as, pale and woebegone, they prepared to land.

The pilot came on board, together with the quarantine officer.

The latter asked one of the passengers if he had any infectious disease.

"Infectious disease? Why, man, we never stayed in one spot long enough to catch anything. Sometimes we were on top of the waves and more times they were on top of us. But if I had all the diseases the flesh is heir to, no power on earth could make me go over the ocean again. I would rather die than attempt it."

Even Fairchild, who was an old and seasoned traveller, had never before experienced such a storm.

No one thought to give the captain any credit for his masterly handling of his craft. Self seemed the predominant feeling in everyone.

When they reached the wharf, each passenger was passed by the custom house officer. There were no farewells, no exchange of addresses. They were all strangers just as much as when they began the voyage.

Fairchild went at once to the hotel, determined to get a good night's rest before proceeding on his journey.

Next morning he awoke refreshed, and lounged about the

hotel until lunch time. Toward afternoon, just as he was about leaving for his lawyer's office, a lady and gentleman sent in their cards.

On entering the reception room, the clerk conducted them to Fairchild. They introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lloyd, Mabel's uncle and aunt, and said their brother had written and asked them to call upon him. They received the letter that morning, and on looking over the paper, saw his name among the hotel arrivals and immediately came to call.

They congratulated him on winning Mabel, her parents having written to that effect when asking them to call.

They insisted on his returning to their home with them. He accepted the invitation which they so graciously extended to him.

Mrs. Lloyd, or Aunt Maud, as Mabel was privileged to call her, had a charming personality, and made Fairchild feel quite like an old friend.

She spoke in glowing terms of Mabel and her attractiveness. You don't know how glad I am she chose an American.

"Poor girl! She was terrified of us when she first came. It seems her parents had an idea I was a regular ogre. It was all in their minds, as we had never met. Strange how people have such ideas of us, isn't it?"

"Mabel has undeceived them now," said Fairchild.

"Oh, yes, the dear girl has. I can see such a difference in their letters to us. I told Charles only the other day, I believed until Mabel came to visit us they had an idea I was some kind of a barbarian of the Indian variety."

Fairchild laughed heartily at this, and said:

"Your husband is not a bit like his brother. He is more like one of us."

"Oh," said Mrs. Lloyd, laughingly, "that's only since I trained him. He was a thorough Briton through and through when I married him."

Mrs. Lloyd was very pleased with Fairchild. She could see Mabel had made a good choice, and was glad for her sake as well as her own.

Fairchild told them of his promise to Mabel to make his home near them, and requested Mrs. Lloyd to help him find a suitable home when the time came, as she would understand better Mabel's tastes.

"And ladies," he said, "always know more about the little niceties than men do."

Mrs. Lloyd expressed her willingness to do all in her power to help him. She really liked Mabel and was anxious to have her near her.

Fairchild wrote to Tom of his arrival and his hopes of soon seeing him and Esther again.

The Lloyds insisted on his extending his visit a while longer, as they wished to introduce him to their circle of friends.

He found many congenial and interesting people among them, and felt, when he settled down, he would not be among strangers.

He still had in mind the old general's words about a man making a prop of himself in whatever community he lived in. Here in New York he could see many things that could be done for the betterment of humanity, and felt, with Mabel's assistance, he could accomplish much. To be sure, she was totally ignorant of the sad side of life. She had always been shielded from such sights, as were everyday occurrences in Fairchild's life. The conditions were different. Mabel lived in an atmosphere of sunshine and love and knew nothing of the countless hordes that live in great cities under such distressful conditions.

If Fairchild had told her that hundreds of worthy men and women go cold and hungry to bed many a night, she would have stared in amazement and probably doubted it. But he had seen such things and been among such communities in his philanthropic ramblings, and knew even then he had not seen the worst of it.

He knew there were plenty cases of sorrow and suffering that could only be relieved by careful and judicious administration of funds. Some one that knew the ins and outs of this class of people were the ones to take hold of it.

He wished to do some good with the money which was

accumulating rapidly, as his tastes were modest; he never had any desire for outward show, and had not formed any extravagant vices. This latter evil he was saved from, not by himself, but by the conditions of his father's will, which kept him on short allowance until he should reach a period in manhood where he would see the folly of such things. This precaution on his father's part saved him from acquiring habits that would probably have come with an abundance of money and extreme youth, conditions that are apt to fail to see the pitfalls and snares laid for them.

So far his life had been free from contaminating influences and was likely to remain so.

The Lloyds could hardly understand his interest in the apparently forgotten class he seemed to want to better.

Their own lives ran along easy and comfortable lines. They never bothered about such things as Fairchild thought necessary.

"Why," said he one day, when they were discussing such problems, "it would never do for all of us to be blind to the needs of the poor."

"But," said Mrs. Lloyd, "we can't all be millionaires, and so cannot have the wherewithal to do these things you deem so necessary."

"That's it," said Fairchild; "the ones that are fortunate enough to have it must do something for those who are not so fortunate."

Mrs. Lloyd acknowledged the truth of the statement.

"Yes," said Fairchild, "each of us has a place to fill, and no one else can fill it for us."

"Come," said Mr. Lloyd, entering the room, "let us take a skim round the park. You two have talked long enough over your impossible schemes."

Fairchild laughed good naturedly, but still felt he could start some kind of a plan, if he could only get some one to carry it out successfully. He did not intend to give up so easily.

They enjoyed the drive immensely. It was just cool enough to start the blood through their veins, and give

them an appetite for the inviting meal they found awaiting them on their return.

"I wish you could have brought Mabel back with you," said Mrs. Lloyd.

"Well, I wanted to bad enough, but her parents would not give her up so soon. So I must wait the probationary six months."

"We might just as well settle down now as later on. That's what I think," answered Mrs. Lloyd.

"Well," said Fairchild, a few mornings after this, "I must tear myself away from you and your husband, Mrs. Lloyd. You have been so kind to me. I have thoroughly enjoyed my visit. I can readily understand Mabel's regret at leaving you, and her anxiety to return. She told me of all this in the early stages of our friendship, before love had entered into either of our minds. She was so enthusiastic over her trip and your kindness to her."

"We could hardly help it," exclaimed Mrs. Lloyd. "She was so affectionate and appreciated our efforts to entertain her. We felt genuine sorrow to see her go, especially so far away. We really ought to thank you for bringing her back to us. The poor girl lost all the pleasure, as she was even afraid to talk to anyone, she received so many cautions from her mother as to her behavior."

"Well," said Fairchild, "she made up for it going home. We had a most delightful voyage all the way over."

Mr. Fairchild bade his host and hostess adieu and took the train toward his home, if such he could call his club. It was in the same city where the Pembertons lived, and was the only home he had known for years. No matter where he travelled it was to this city he always returned when he wished to rest up. After he became acquainted with the Pembertons their home seemed to become his.

He was always a welcome visitor there, and recalled with pleasure the many happy evenings he had spent with the family.

Now, as he was speeding toward them, old memories flooded over him. He was anxious to meet the familiar faces again and shake hands with his old friends. He was

especially interested in Tom and Esther, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton.

He knew he would receive a warm welcome from Tom, and he was not deceived.

When he met Tom at the club his hearty hand-clasp left no room for doubt as to the sincerity of the greeting.

"Come to the grill and have dinner with me," said Tom, cordially.

Fairchild accepted only too gladly, and a more enjoyable meal could hardly have been possible.

Tom's good spirits infected Fairchild, who told him of his engagement to Mabel.

"That's the best news I have heard in a long time," said Tom enthusiastically. "Esther will be delighted."

"By the way, how is she?" asked Fairchild.

"Handsome as ever," said Tom, excitedly. "She is one of the noblest girls in creation. She has been faithful to me all through her father's opposition, and under the most trying circumstances. I appreciate such love as hers; it will endure forever," said Tom. "It's worth winning, and it's worth waiting for."

"Well, Tom," said Fairchild, "I do hope Mr. Pemberton will act reasonable to you."

"I intend to ask him as soon as I meet him again. I am afraid it's useless, Fred. I have worked hard and faithful, and have been rewarded splendidly by the bank, who have advanced me steadily, until now I occupy a responsible position. But it seems to have no effect so far, although he always congratulates me on my advancement, and could not treat me any nicer than he does when I visit the house. I almost live there," said Tom, laughingly.

"I could give Esther a home now, with every comfort. My investments have proved very successful, and I can easily count on double the amount my father left me. My salary more than keeps me. Of course I will be just to Mr. Pemberton. It's some time since I broached the subject to him; he would work himself into such a fury that Esther and I decided it would be better to wait a while longer be-

fore again asking his consent. Are you going to call on them? You might as well come with me," said Tom.

"I would be glad to, as I am anxious to meet them, especially Esther. But, Tom, you need not be jealous of me this time. I have got over all that, and think Mabel is really more suitable to me than Esther."

"Sour grapes," laughed Tom.

"May be," answered Fairchild. "But Mabel has all my affections now. Honestly, I am really deeply in love with her. You and Esther will like her, I know. She is very attractive in looks and manner. We are going to be married in six months time and will live in New York."

"Oh, she is a New Yorker, then," said Tom.

"No, indeed, she is not. She is one of England's fairest daughters. I met on the way over preparatory to going to Ceylon."

"Quite romantic," smiled Tom. "I used to think you were too matter of fact for romance, but I suppose the spark of sentiment lies buried in all of us, only waiting for the fire of love to ignite it and set it to burning. Come, Fred," said Tom, "let us go to the club and dress for our visit."

They rose from the table, both happy to be together again. They were in many ways situated the same, each being alone in the world, their parents having died many years before, and neither having a brother or sister to chum with. Since their mutual understanding, before Fairchild took his trip, they had been more like brothers. True, most of their friendship had been through letters that had passed between them, but now they were together again this strong bond of friendship held them closer than ever. True friendship is naturally of a slower growth. The spontaneous kind, that gushes and captivates us on the spot, seldom endures, but flits butterfly-like, from one to the other, sipping the sweet morsels as it goes lightly by us, while the enduring kind shares our joys and sorrows as if they were their own, and helps us carry our burdens, be they ever so heavy, and gives us a helping hand over the thorny and sharp places in our lives, lifting us up and over the ob-

stacles that block our way as we toil onward through sorrow and pain.

As they walked briskly toward the Pemberton home, Fairchild entertained Tom with a brief account of his trip.

"I must go out in the world," said Tom, "and see some of its wonders, some day. One gets narrow-viewed living in the same surroundings and is apt to judge the world by his own little limit."

"I find traveling broadens one out," said Fairchild. "Still you always come back more pleased than ever with your own country. You have no idea how the sight of one's own flag thrills you, especially when you meet it in foreign waters. You feel like rushing up and greeting it as you would an old friend."

Tom, never having left his own country, only for the short visit to Havana, was anxious, on hearing Fairchild's descriptions of different parts of the world, planned in his mind to visit them with Esther as his companion.

"Why, here we are," exclaimed Fairchild, as they found themselves in front of the Pemberton residence.

They walked rapidly up the steps and rang the bell. The door was opened and they were ushered in, Esther coming forward to greet Tom as he entered the drawing-room. She drew back when she saw he had some one with him.

"Esther, don't you know who this is?" said Tom. "I don't think so," she answered.

"Look again and see."

By this time they were in full view and in the light.

"Of course I know now who it is; it's Fred."

She grasped his extended hand and shook it warmly, saying, "Welcome home again."

"Thank you, Esther," answered Fairchild.

"I must go and tell father and mother you are here."

She returned with her parents, who were both glad to see him again.

Mr. Pemberton was the only member of the family that had changed in appearance. He had aged very much in the short time Fairchild had been gone. The lines on his

face had deepened, and a care-worn expression had taken the place of the once determined one that predominated.

He was cordial enough to Fairchild, having apparently forgotten the old resentment he had for him, of which Fairchild knew nothing.

Mr. Pemberton was glad to see him back.

"He will know his own mind by now," he thought.

He still hoped he would marry Esther, but it was not long before he was undeceived, for in telling of his trip to Esther he mentioned Mabel, forgetting that they did not know her.

"Mabel?" said Esther, "who is she."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. I told Tom when we were at dinner. She is to be my future wife."

"I never even knew you were engaged."

"Tom," she said, turning to him laughingly, "are you keeping secrets from me already? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I only heard it a little while ago myself, and had not a chance to tell you yet."

"What's that, Fairchild?", said Mr. Pemberton.

"Oh, I was just telling your daughter about my engagement to Mabel Lloyd, a lovely English girl I met on the steamer going over."

"Your engagement!"

"Yes, sir, my engagement. I consider myself lucky in winning such a charming girl."

"Huh!" said Mr. Pemberton, as he rose and walked out of the room.

Fairchild looked after him in wonder.

"You musn't mind father," said Esther. "I don't believe he feels well. He is not like himself lately."

After this the conversation became general, everyone being interested in Fairchild's description of Ceylon and his hunting trips. They asked him endless questions about everything he saw.

Esther thanked him for remembering her with such lovely presents, especially a beautiful brass chafing dish

with mystic emblems emblazoned on it. It won the admiration of all her friends, being the only one of its kind among her circle of friends.

She invited Tom and Fairchild to stay and see what an appetizing supper she could prepare with it.

They needed no pressing, and remained while she concocted a savory dish and spread an inviting repast before them.

"The girls thought it was terrible to desecrate such a lovely piece of brass work by cooking in it. I did resist for some time, but my practical nature rebelled against making an ornament of anything so useful."

After eating heartily of Esther's supper, they both declared the meal and the cook were perfect. Esther made a mock courtesy in acknowledgment of the compliment.

Mr. Pemberton, on smelling the appetizing dish, returned to the room. Mrs. Pemberton having retired, he refused however to partake of it, as he was a martyr to indigestion.

Esther fixed up a simple collation, such as he could enjoy without distress. He recovered his spirits and chatted pleasantly with them.

After a while he rose, but invited Fairchild to come into the library before he went, as he had a stock report to give him.

"You have been gone so long it will probably interest you."

"I will come now, Mr. Pemberton, as it must be getting late. Just wait for me, Tom." So saying, he followed Mr. Pemberton out of the room.

When he had gone, they fell to discussing Fairchild's engagement. It surprised them both.

"I am beginning to think," said Esther, "the men only practice on me. They soon get consoled when I refuse them."

"Be careful, Esther," laughed Tom, "I might be just practicing on you."

"Oh, I am not afraid of your leaving me. You do love me I know."

"Of course I do, Esther."

"I do believe father will relent; he must, or I'll elope with you."

"You're not that desperate," exclaimed Tom.

"No, not quite," said Esther.

"Here comes Fairchild with his stock report, so I must be going," said Tom.

They wished her good night, Fairchild thanking her warmly for the welcome home she had given him. He appreciated it very much to have some one glad to see him.

When they were gone, Esther went to her father, who was in the library, as had been her custom of late, to have a chat before retiring.

As she entered the door, he looked up and said, "Well, Esther, what do you think of Fairchild being engaged?"

"I must admit, father, it surprised me. But, after all, it's only natural he should wish to have a home of his own. It must be very lonely living at a club house."

"The only thing I am sorry for, Esther," sighed Mr. Pemberton, "is that he did not choose you."

"His choice of a wife probably suits him better than I would, father," she answered. "It wouldn't do for all men to love the same girl, besides——" she hesitated.

"Besides what, Esther?"

"Oh, nothing, father."

"Now, Esther, tell me what you were going to say."

"If I do, father, you will only be angry with me. So it's best not."

"I want to hear it, Esther. I promise you I will not show any anger to you even if I feel it."

"Well, I was only going to say, father, I never could have loved Mr. Fairchild, because I love Tom."

"What; love Tom yet?"

He paused a long time. Gradually recovering himself, he said, "Come, Esther, it's getting late; we both had better be going to our rooms."

He gave her no answer, so she could not tell how he felt toward Tom.

"But," she thought, "he knows how I feel."

Kissing him good night, she left the room.

"So, she still loves Tom," mused Mr. Pemberton, as soon as Esther closed the door and was gone.

He sat thinking a long time; then suddenly catching himself nodding sleepily, arose, turned off the lights and ascended the stairs to his room.

CHAPTER XXII.

RENEWING OLD FRIENDSHIPS.

Mr. Fairchild spent next day visiting among his old friends. They were all pleased to see him again. He strolled around town, greeting here and there a forgotten friend, until at last he found himself wandering far from the busy haunts. Coming to a street car, he got on and rode as far as it went, which happened to be near the park.

He walked toward the park, hoping to catch a glimpse of Jamie's freckled face. He looked in vain, but hearing a newsboy shouting lustily, "All about the sooeside," he watched until he turned around, then beckoned to him, and, on buying a paper, asked him if he knew Jamie.

"What Jamie do you want? There are six Jamies selling newspapers round here."

"The one I want is Jamie Mulligan," said Fairchild.

"Aw, that stuck up guy? Why he don't sell papers any more."

"How's that," asked Fairchild.

"He runs a newsstand for Mr. Flynn," said the boy, running off.

"I wish I had asked him where the newsstand was," thought Fairchild.

As he began to unfold the paper to read about the suicide, another boy came along with papers. He inquired of him, but he knew less than the first. So he started to read.

It proved to be one more unfortunate driven to self-destruction by want and poverty. He read on for a while, but finding nothing of special interest in it, folded it up and put it into his pocket to finish later on.

He walked to the entrance of the park, stopped at a peanut stand, bought some nuts and inquired of the vender if he knew where Flynn's newsstand was.

"Right across the street, sir."

Thanking him, Fairchild crossed over. As he neared the stand, someone called out:

"How do you do, Mr. Fairchild?"

He looked in every direction, but could see no one. As he stepped up to the newsstand the greeting was repeated. He saw now where it came from, but did not recognize the young man.

"You have the advantage of me," he said.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Fairchild?"

"No, I'm sure I don't," answered Fairchild.

"You ought to, sir. I'm Jamie Mulligan."

"Jamie," said he in astonishment, looking at the neat appearing young man. His shock of red curls had been cut off apparently by a barber; his clean face and neat suit gave him such a changed appearance, it was no wonder Fairchild did not recognize the ragged street urchin he left that day in the park.

"Why, Jamie, I never would have known you, especially in those," pointing to Jamie's long trousers and well shod feet.

Jamie had always been barefoot to the best of his recollection.

"You have transformed wonderfully."

"I do look different," said Jamie. "Miss Pemberton fixed me up and got me this job. People's particular wot comes—that comes, I mean," said Jamie, correcting his speech, "here to buy. A fellow's got to look spruce and talk right. I go to night school now. I never went to any school much, but Miss Pemberton says no one can riz—oh, I mean rise," said Jamie, again correcting himself, "unless they have an education. She's awful kind to me.

I think my Ma would have cried herself sick if it had not been for Miss Pemberton."

"How was that?" inquired Fairchild.

"Well, she always set so much on my curls, and they had to go when I got this place. And Ma, she felt awful, and took on so about my beauty being all gone. She was not used to seeing me without them. Miss Pemberton wiped Ma's eyes and told her I was going to make money for her, and people would laugh at a boy like me with long curls and in long trousers, too. That didn't help much, but when Miss Pemberton offered to buy the curls for twenty dollars, Ma, she wiped the tears off pretty quick at the sight of so much money, and then Miss Pemberton gave the curls to Ma as a souvenir of me."

"That was very nice of Miss Pemberton," said Fairchild. "You were fortunate in having such a good friend."

"Indeed, I was," said Jamie, gratefully. "She does lots of kind things for everybody."

Fairchild bought some magazines and talked with Jamie for some time. He inquired where his employer was.

"He is sick in the hospital," said Jamie.

"Do you take care of his stand for him alone?"

"Yes," answered Jamie. "I always mind the money for him. Anyway, he is not much of a scholar. Neither am I, but I can make change and count better than he can. I learnt that selling papers," explained Jamie. "So I make the change always, even when he is here."

Fairchild liked to talk with Jamie. He was quick and intelligent, and, with a little education, would develop into a good business man. His early life on the streets taught him self-reliance and the hustling habit, which is the keynote of success in every walk of life. Newsboys never wait for a customer to come to them. They go out and find them. So it is in all kinds of business, the one that is always alert and looking for trade, gets it. Jamie found this out while he was still young, might say, in his infancy, for his kind go out young to do their hustling.

Fairchild could hardly believe this was the same boy. His whole nature seemed changed. It could not be pos-

sible that change of clothes did it. No, he was convinced that deeper down in Jamie's nature there was an intelligence just waiting for time to bring out. There was the making of a good man in him, but the best forces in his nature had not had the help of education. Now that the wedge was in enough to start it, there were great possibilities ahead of him.

He had been a good, dutiful son, even in his ignorance, and now he showed a promise of better manhood than is usually found in boys that find the street their only school.

"Good bye, Jamie," said Mr. Fairchild, as he was leaving. "I am glad to see you so well started toward making a living."

"Thank you, sir," answered Jamie. "Come in again and see me, please."

"I will gladly," said Fairchild, as he walked away from the stand.

He took the car up town, still wondering at Jamie's transformation.

When he came to his club, he alighted, and on going there, found several letters awaiting him. Among them he found one from Ceylon. On opening, he found it was from Harry Nelson telling in a most interesting way of the doings of the family since Fairchild left.

Of course Elsie came in for the major share. He was still rapturously in love with her. They were both impatient to get married, especially since hearing from Harry's mother, who was pining for her son's return, and wished him to bring Elsie home with him as his wife.

In fact, at Harry's request, she wrote to Mrs. Nichols, asking her to use her influence with her husband to let the young people marry.

Mr. Nichols had promised to think it over. He could not bear to give Elsie up, as in late years he had seen so little of her.

They were all planning to spend Christmas in England. There would be quite a party of them. Harry wanted Fairchild to meet them there. After he read the letter he concluded he would go, as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lloyd were

going, too, and there would be quite a reunion of friends.

If possible, he would induce Mabel's parents to allow them to be married while they were all together, Mrs. Nelson having become quite intimate with Mrs. Lloyd and Mabel.

He answered Harry's letter, telling him of his intention, and also wrote to Mabel about it, hoping she would be willing, with her parents' permission, to return with him.

On returning from mailing his letters, he met Tom, and told him the news.

"It seems," said Tom, "everyone's love runs smooth but ours."

"Cheer up," said Fairchild, "Mr. Pemberton will come to yet. You see all you want of Esther, and can be together most of the time. Just look at me, with the broad expanse of ocean between Mabel and me."

"That's so," answered Tom. "But I want Esther all to myself, in my own home, where we will be at liberty to go and come as we please."

"That's natural," answered Fairchild; "you have been wonderfully patient through it all, Tom."

"Yes; but one's patience is liable to wear out under the strain."

"Can't you spend the evening with me, Tom, if it's not asking too much of you to give up Esther's company?"

"I don't see how I can, Fred, as I promised to accompany Mrs. Pemberton and Esther to the theatre this evening. I wish you could come along, too, Fred."

"I'd like to, Tom, but I would hardly feel like intruding on them."

As they walked to the club, Fairchild asked him to dine with him, but Tom had to refuse again, as he was going to dine with the Pembertons.

"You're a lucky fellow, Tom, to have a home like that to go to. Here, with all my money, I am nothing but a loafer. Just going from club to street and street to club. I will be glad when I have a home. I never thought much about it until lately, but I have visited in so many happy homes that now I am anxious to have one of my own."

"That's how I feel," said Tom. "I am tired of the glare of the club rooms." So saying, he said good bye.

Fairchild stepped into the dining room, while Tom went to his room to dress for dinner. Next evening, as Fairchild was studying over his trip to England, he found Christmas was only a few weeks off. He concluded to write to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lloyd to find out when they were going to start, so that he would have their company across.

They answered his letter of inquiry, and invited him to come and visit them, and they would make their arrangements together.

He left the following day for New York, and found Mr. Lloyd there to meet him on his arrival.

Mrs. Lloyd greeted him very warmly and expressed her pleasure at meeting him again.

"It will be just delightful to have your company, especially as I want your support. You have visited them, and know them, while I have yet to go through the ordeal of criticism. I just dread my English relatives, and if it were not for Mabel, I would hardly have the courage to face them. I know just how they will regard me. I will be analyzed and dissected at every move."

"You are really mistaken, Mrs. Lloyd; you will find them just charming. They will strike you as cold and reserved at first, but that soon wears off, and you will find yourself saying that you never visited such a pleasant home. The genuine English welcome is never forgotten; it is simply irresistible. Their houses seem built for hospitality. Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd were ideal entertainers as far as I was concerned. You feel like Mabel did when she was coming to visit you. It's a mistaken idea on your part, just as it was on hers."

"Well, I hope it will be as you say," said Mrs. Lloyd, "but I am morbidly sensitive to criticism. I can't bear to be treated coolly."

"I will vouch for a warm welcome for you from everyone," said Fairchild.

"Thank you," answered Mrs. Lloyd. "I am more than pleased that you are going with us. Mabel has told me

so much about their delightful Christmas traditions, carols and Yuletide festivities, that I have ever since longed to participate in them."

The time passed rapidly, and preparations being complete, they were ready now to start off. They left on one of the new liners, expecting to reach their journey's end at least a week before Christmas.

This was the express wish of the Lloyds in England, as the week before Christmas and on until New Year is usually very lively, the preparations in which every one takes part and the actual celebrating itself being full of good cheer.

When the steamer drew into the dock, they found the Nichols, with Elsie, Harry, George, and his wife, all waiting to meet them.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lloyd were introduced, and the jolly party were soon on their way, the Nichols to visit the Nelsons, and the Lloyds and Fairchild to visit Mr. Lloyd's brother.

Mabel was all excitement to meet Fred again. She had grown to love him more and more, and could hardly restrain her joy at meeting him so soon again.

When she heard the carriage coming up the drive, she ran to be the first to meet them.

Fairchild felt an almost boyish gayness when he clasped her in his arms.

When he released her she ran to Aunt Maud, giving her a warm embrace; then to Uncle Charles, hugging him until he gasped for breath.

"Why, Mabel, be careful; your Aunt Maud will go wild if she sees the girls hugging me like this. She is awfully careful of me," he said, laughing heartily.

Aunt Maud was soon at home with them all. They could not resist her attractive ways and found her just what Mabel pronounced her to be, "just perfectly lovely."

She forgot her dread of them and everything else in the hearty welcome she received.

Such chattering as there was, everyone had something to say, and all wanted to say it at once.

"Come, Fred," said Mabel, "let us get away from this magpie convention.

"Just what I was thinking of," answered Fred. "We can't hear ourselves talk. Aunt Maud wants a chance anyway to be heard, and they all seem to want to hear her, too."

"Yes," said Mabel, "I knew they could not help loving her. Just look at mother; she's patting Aunt Maud's hands. That's quite an advance for her to make. She is so conservative with strangers, and you know Aunt Maud is a perfect stranger to father and mother."

Fred and Mabel had so much to say to one another that they quite forgot the flight of time until Mr. Lloyd announced it was time to dress for dinner.

They went to their different apartments to prepare for it, Mabel humming gaily to herself as she put some extra touches to her toilet in honor of Fairchild.

When they all met again at the dinner table the fun and jollity were resumed. Even Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd found themselves growing gay before the meal was over, Aunt Maud's witty remarks causing much merriment.

On returning to the drawing-room, they separated into groups, where the conversation was resumed and lasted until a late hour, when, tired, happy and sleepy, they all retired.

The Lloyds' relatives began to arrive each day for the first few days, and everywhere was bustle and excitement.

Aunt Maud was enjoying her first acquaintance with the numerous Lloyd progeny. Even Uncle Charles had to be introduced to the babies that had grown up and matured during his absence.

"Dear, dear," he exclaimed, "this is what makes a man realize he is old. Here are all these young ladies and gentlemen, whom I left as little tots, preparing homes for themselves, and I was not one of them, either, but a well developed young man when I left here."

"Never mind, Charles; throw age to the winds, like I am doing, and be a boy again," said his wife.

"That's easy for you to do, Maud. You're a long way behind me in years."

"Now, Charles, you would like everyone to believe you are a patriarch, wouldn't you?"

"I am beginning to feel like one, when I hear them talking about the third generation of Lloyds."

"Oh, Aunt Maud," cried Mabel, joyously, "did you hear what we are planning? We are going to take you up to London and show you all the historical places, and make a good English woman of you."

"That's impossible," laughed Uncle Charles. "I have been trying to do that for ten years. The first thing I knew, I was the one that was transformed. Now my own relatives don't know me."

"Well, you're just lovely the way you are, Uncle Charles. I never could picture you any other way," said Mabel.

"No? Well, I'll admit I never was as dignified as your father. He carried it for both of us. That's what I enjoy about New York, it's freedom from tradition. I don't have to walk with a stately tread because my grandfather did. I don't have to live up to my ancestors. They are not as fond as we are of resurrecting them." laughed Uncle Charles, "so we just live our own lives in our own way."

"That's what Fred and I are going to do," exclaimed Mabel. "We are going to be, oh, so—what is it that you call it, Fred?"

"Democratic, independent in thought and action, go where we please, and do what we please, when we please—that will be our motto."

"That's all right in theory, but how about practicing it, Fred?"

"I think it will work all right," said the latter.

The remainder of the week was spent in entertaining Aunt Maud. Uncle Charles enjoyed it as much as she did, he having been gone so long. It interested him to visit the scenes of his boyhood, and renew old friendships.

Towards the middle of the week, Uncle Charles and Aunt Maud, together with Fred and Mabel, went up to London, so that Aunt Maud could see the immense throngs

of people, also the shops, which Mabel assured her were so different from New York.

They were a wonderfully happy party. Aunt Maud was bent on seeing everything, and Uncle Charles seemed willing to be dragged from shop to shop and more often himself brought the party to a sudden halt to listen to some hawker singing in his own peculiar way of his wares.

This musical way of drawing attention to his goods was new to Aunt Maud. She could not resist stopping every now and then to listen to them.

The good-natured crowds jostled one another; a bump, or a knock from anyone was taken kindly. Everyone was laughing and hurrying along, stopping once in a while to look at some attractive display in a window or at some clown-like peddler, making fantastic steps and grimaces as he sold his toys at the street corner.

Once they encountered a large crowd outside a shop. Aunt Maud was anxious to see what it was all about.

"It's nothing but a meat display," said Mabel.

"Well, I want to see it," smiled Aunt Maud. "I'm a Yankee, you know, and we are very inquisitive."

She elbowed her way through the crowd until at last she could obtain a glimpse of the shop. The rest of the party were obliged to follow. They were rather embarrassed at Aunt Maud's curiosity, but she was bound to see everything, no matter what it was.

"Why, Mabel," she exclaimed, "I'm glad I got here. I never saw such art displayed before on such a plebeian foundation. Why those sheep would hardly recognize themselves if they could see how they look."

"Oh, Mabel, don't look so disgusted with me. This is the part of the holidays I enjoy. I do want to investigate everything."

"Well," said Uncle Charles, "aren't you rather overdoing it?"

"Why?" said Aunt Maud.

"Just look at the crowd you are hobnobbing with."

"Aunt Maud colored as she looked around at them.

"You're right, Charles, we had better get out of here."

"Let us go to Crystal Palace and see the holiday display of fruits and flowers, if you want to view the practical side," said Mabel, who did not relish elbowing with such a conglomeration of individuals.

The rest of the day was spent going from place to place until darkness overtook them, and reminded them that they were hungry.

They returned to the hotel, dined and rested before sallying forth again.

Aunt Maud wanted to see London by night, so as usual she had her way.

They were all tired out, but as the object of the visit was to show Aunt Maud the sights, they felt it was their duty to comply with her wishes.

The "hawkers" were more numerous than in the day time; there were numbers out with odd shaped ovens selling all kinds of substantial eatables.

Arry and Arriet were out in force, and patronized these stands liberally, for it was Christmas time and the purse strings were loosened.

Uncle Charles asked his wife slyly if she would like to step up and enjoy a roast potato. She was indignant.

"Why, Charles, what can you be thinking of to make such a proposition?"

"Now, Maud, don't get excited. You've dragged us almost into a meat shop, and meat and potatoes seem such a natural combination, I could not resist the temptation of offering you some."

After this they returned to their rooms. Aunt Maud, throwing herself wearily into a chair, said, "I don't believe I was ever so tired in my life. But when I think of all the odd things and people I have seen to-day, I feel it's worth it. I never did understand Dickens. I could not picture such impossible characters, but now I know they exist, for I have seen and heard them."

"You think you have, Aunt Maud," said Mabel, "but we can bring you nearer to him than those to his characters."

"Nearer than those costermongers we talked with to-day?" exclaimed Aunt Maud.

"Yes," said Mabel, "I can duplicate a half dozen or more of his creations, right in our own village."

"You must introduce me to them, Mabel, when we return."

"I will," laughed Mabel, "and I will show you some odd characters that have never been immortalized by Dickens, or anyone else."

"Well," said Uncle Charles, "I don't know how you feel, but I feel as if a downy couch would just fit my needs. I am just tired to death."

They all admitted that they were in the same condition, so it was unanimously agreed that they retire. In spite of their weariness, they all slept well, and were up early next morning ready to start out again.

As they met at the breakfast table, they decided, at Mabel's suggestion, of visiting Guildhall.

"This is not where the guides would take you," said Mabel, "but we consider it well worth seeing."

So it was settled that during the morning they would go there.

Towards ten o'clock they started for Charing Cross, and hired hansom cabs to take them to Guildhall.

Aunt Maud motioned to Uncle Charles to take his seat by her, intending to leave Fred and Mabel to take the other cab, thinking they would prefer to ride together.

Mabel jumped into the waiting cab, calling Uncle Charles to ride with her.

"He's going to ride with me," said Aunt Maud.

"Not in a hansom cab in London," said Mabel.

"Why?" asked Aunt Maud, in surprise.

"Because he must ride with me," answered Mabel. "Don't you know it is an unwritten law with us that a single lady and gentleman must not ride together in a hansom cab if they value their reputation?"

"I never heard of anything so absurd," said Aunt Maud. "What difference does it make? You can ride in an omnibus together and your reputation is safe, is it not?"

"Yes," answered Mabel.

"Oh, dear, what funny ideas you English have!"

"Don't blame me," said Mabel. "Some of our forefathers are to blame for this absurdity, and we have just followed it up."

After this discussion, they took the places tradition said they should, and drove to Guildhall. They passed many notable places along the route, which the obliging drivers pointed out, also giving them much valuable information concerning them.

At last they arrived at the Guildhall, whose history dates from the time of Henry IV. Its walks are splendid specimens of masonry, having withstood the great fire of 1666.

The old crypt is a fine piece of work, and is considered one of the earliest and best examples of its kind in England. At each end are magnificent Gothic windows.

Aunt Maud went into raptures over the colossal statues of Gog and Magog.

Mabel informed her that here, in the Guildhall, the city's great banquets were held, the banquet hall holding from six to seven thousand people.

"It was here, Aunt Maud, that Whittington entertained Henry V and his queen."

"My dear Mabel, don't crowd us with too much history. Charles," she said, turning to her husband, "you take notes, and then I won't get all mixed up when I tell them about this in New York."

"If Mabel is going to give us a lecture at each place she shows us, what's the matter with taking up a collection to defray expenses," said Uncle Charles.

"Now, Uncle Charles, I won't tell you another thing," said Mabel.

"I was going to take you to Fishmongers Hall, and show you the dagger that one of our Lord Mayors killed Wat Tyler with; but, if you are going to make fun of me, I won't show you another thing."

"Oh, do, Mabel, there's a darling," said Aunt Maud. "I just want to see everything. I don't know who Wat Tyler was, but I would just love to see the dagger."

"I suppose I'll have to forgive you then," answered Mabel laughing, "and show you some of the halls."

They went to Fishmongers Hall, Mercers Hall, Goldsmiths Hall, and even to Clothworkers Hall, in Mincing Lane.

"This is the most modern of all," said Mabel.

"Yes," said Aunt Maud, who could hardly keep up with Mabel's history, so confused was she with seeing and hearing so much.

"It's all halls," she exclaimed at last, laughingly. "I think we have seen enough for one day."

So saying, they stepped into the waiting cabs and drove to the hotel, deciding next day to visit some of the churches.

"Then," said Mabel, "we must go home, as we have only two days to Christmas, and mamma will be expecting us back. We can return and see more after the holidays."

They fell to discussing all they had seen, and were grateful to Mabel for the trouble she had taken in pointing out the places of interest.

Next morning they visited All Hallows, St. Augustine, St. Margaret Pattens, St. Martin on Ludgate Hill, and many other churches, finding them unusually interesting, as most of them are rich in monuments, brasses and old carvings.

"Is it not wonderful," said Fred, "how much we miss. Here I have visited London many times, and in the last few days I have seen so much that escaped my attention during other visits."

"And, Fred, you have not seen half the curious places I could show you if we had time," said Mabel. "If we were not going home to-morrow, I would take you to see Beauchamp Tower and St. Paul's Cathedral, but I want to get a few things for mamma in the morning, and then we must take the train home."

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd were in the midst of superintending the putting up of the decorations when the party arrived from London next afternoon.

They were loud in their praises of Mabel as a guide.

"She missed her vocation," said Uncle Charles, "when

she did not espouse lecturing for a living. It would astonish you how she expounded on the virtues of each relic she showed us."

"Now, Uncle Charles, it's awful of you to make fun of me like that after my taking so much trouble to brush up your historical knowledge."

"I am profoundly grateful to you; I had almost forgotten the doughty deeds of my countrymen."

"Come now," said one of the relatives, "and help us with the decorations."

Everyone entered into the work with a gusto.

Aunt Maud, not being used to English ways, was forever doing things the wrong way.

In the midst of her work some one called out to her, "Don't put that mistletoe over the sideboard," as she was endeavoring to fasten a bunch that should go over the door or on the chandelier. "One never puts mistletoe only where people can walk under it."

"Why?" said Aunt Maud.

"Because of the penalty."

"What penalty?" asked Aunt Maud.

"Oh, Maud," said Uncle Charles, "but you are dense. Don't you know if a lady stands under the mistletoe, the gentleman that sees it has the privilege of kissing her?"

"So that's why they are so particular where it goes, is it?" laughed Aunt Maud.

"Married people don't count," called out Mabel.

"I have something to say about that question," answered Uncle Charles. "If I catch one under it I'll make her pay the penalty."

They had lots of fun at Aunt Maud's expenses, but she took their bantering all in good humor, and in the same spirit in which it was offered.

The decorations being now complete, they all sat down and talked reminiscently of other Christmas times they had spent, Aunt Maud being especially interested in the recital of old time frolics and fun. While they were talking the sweet strains of music struck their ears.

"Listen!" said Aunt Maud. "What is it?"

"It's the village choir boys singing the carols."

"How heavenly," exclaimed Aunt Maud, as the last notes of the beautiful anthem, "Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Men" floated away in the distance.

A hushed stillness took possession of everyone, until Mr. Lloyd whispered "Amen."

Next morning Christmas dawned. Everyone met at the breakfast table. Greetings and presents were exchanged amidst all kinds of good wishes, and a merry time was spent. The genial spirit of good fellowship pervaded every place.

Most of the members of the family attended the morning service at the village church, returning home for lunch. After that all took a walk to the grand old oaks at the rear of the Lloyd home.

In the evening was dinner, with all its gorgeousness and brilliancy. Aunt Maud's spirits were at a fever heat. The blazing plum pudding, with its sprig of holly, was carried in with old time ceremony. Health was drunk and ladies were toasted and flattered to their heart's content.

The rest of the evening was spent in old time games and dancing, finishing up with the good old dance "Sir Roger de Coverley."

This was by no means the end, for during the ensuing days the spirit of Christmas was still upon them, and they went up to London to see the "Pantomime" at Drury Lane Theatre.

Aunt Maud wondered at this, but Mabel told her it was as much a part of Christmas as the holly was.

It was the first time Aunt Maud had viewed an English Pantomime, and she was perfectly carried away with it.

"It's the loveliest thing I ever saw!" she exclaimed, "a perfect fairy land of beauty. Why can't we have such shows, Charles?" she asked. "Talk about the English taking their pleasures seriously, it's all nonsense; I never met people that so thoroughly enjoy their holidays and sports."

"That's because they take the time to do it, and don't rush at it like we do," said Fred; "hurrying to get it over with so as to have more time to chase the elusive dollar."

"Well," said Aunt Maud, "there's one thing I like here. You can take your time to eat; there's no rush like we have, trying to dine out, and go to a lecture and theatre all at once."

New Year's Eve was the annual ball for the tenantry on the Lloyd estate. Mabel and Fred took charge of it this year at Mr. Lloyd's request, seeing to it that everyone enjoyed himself.

This was a new experience to Aunt Maud, to see the family mingling with the tenants. She entered into the spirit of it, dancing with one of the farm lads, much to his delight. She could not understand half he said, as he spoke in some peculiar dialect, but he evidently was enjoying the dance. He almost whirled her off her feet, but as that seemed to be the way they all did, she caught on to the fun of it, and was as lively as anyone there.

The next few weeks were spent in visiting and receiving visitors, the relatives having all left for their homes.

Aunt Maud and Uncle Charles were guests of honor at many functions, and many were the compliments the latter received about his charming wife.

"Don't you wish we could stay here forever, Charles? I do. I believe I would like this kind of life. Everyone is so good to us."

"Yes," said Charles, "this is very enjoyable, but as our bread and butter is at the other side of the Atlantic, we will soon have to say farewell to all these good people."

"Charles," said Mr. Lloyd to his brother, "I want you to take Maud up to London before you leave us, and show her Lloyd's headquarters for the largest maritime insurance of the world, founded by one of our esteemed ancestors."

"I must do that," said Charles, "it would interest her. I told her I would do so before we left New York, but in all the excitement it slipped my memory."

"Be sure and take her to view Windsor Castle."

"My goodness, brother, we will never get back if I go showing her too much; it would take the rest of our natural lives to see all the historical places. She will be wanting to come every Christmas."

"Well, why not?" said Mr. Lloyd. "We will be glad to have you."

"But," said Charles, "it's your turn to come to us."

"You must never expect that. My wife would never cross the Atlantic, she is so afraid of the ocean, and I would not think of going without her."

"How about Mabel? You will want to see her."

"Yes, that's true; but Fred has promised to bring her home often."

"Are you going to let her come back with us?"

"I suppose I must. Fred is anxious to take her. Although I can't bear to part with her, still I feel I am giving her into good hands. So I need not worry over her."

"He is a splendid fellow, as far as I can see," continued Mr. Lloyd, "and I feel perfectly satisfied over her future."

"You're right," said Charles. "I made particular inquiries about him, and he is all you say. You need have no fear of trusting Mabel's future to him. He stands well everywhere."

Aunt Maud and Mabel were so busy visiting and returning calls that Uncle Charles and Fred were practically deserted.

Fred took this opportunity to have a talk with Mabel's father over the prospects of taking her back with him.

Mr. Lloyd talked long and earnestly with Fred, and when he had thoroughly satisfied himself with Fred's mode of life, consented, asking him, if possible, not to break his promise of bringing her home to visit occasionally.

"I will keep my word, most assuredly. I know how much she must mean to you, as she is very precious to me."

"Well," said Mr. Lloyd, "you can talk with Mabel and tell her what I have said."

Fred lost no time that evening after dinner in acquainting her with her father's wishes.

"Won't that be lovely?" said Mabel, enthusiastically. "I can go back with you all. I never dared to tell mamma how much I wanted to live there—it's so lively and gay. I never expected to make my home there, though. It's

just lovely of you, Fred, to be so good to me; it's no wonder I love you."

"Are you sure you do?" asked Fred, earnestly.

"Of course I am sure; it seems to me I've always loved you."

"Mabel, you don't know how happy you have made me. I have some incentive now to go ahead and accomplish something. I was getting very tired of being a homeless wanderer, of no use to myself or anyone else."

"Fred, don't talk like that, please. Uncle Charles says you do lots of good that no one hears anything about."

"It's very kind of him to say so," answered Fred.

"Come, Mabel," said Aunt Maud, "we are making more plans about seeing London, and we wish to consult the 'guide,' as the tourists say."

Mabel took Fred's hand and brought him with her. The rest of the company made room around the fire for them where they were sitting.

"Your father wants us to see Lloyd's and Windsor Castle."

"Anything else?" laughed Mabel.

"Don't tell her about any more places, please," said Uncle Charles. "We must start for home before long. I will never get Maud there as long as there is any old relic to visit."

"I do want to see Lloyd's. When Charles used to dilate on its history I never felt very interested, but now, since I am in a country where ancestors count, I want to study them up," said Aunt Maud. "On our side of the water the question is, How much money has he got? On this side it's, Who is he?"

"They are both important," said Fred. "You know the old saying: 'Blood will tell.'"

"So will dollars," said Uncle Charles, dryly. "There are a certain class of people who judge everyone from the money standard."

"That's true enough," said Fred. "Never mind such worldly discussions; let us get back to business. When will we go on our exploring expedition?"

"To-morrow morning," said Uncle Charles, "if you can go."

"What do you say, Mabel?" said Aunt Maud.

"I have nothing to say, as I am not going."

"Not going!" said Aunt Maud, in amazement. "Why, if you please?"

"Because——"

"Because what, my dear?"

"Well, Fred and mother and I want to talk over some business."

"What business is it that's so important?" asked Aunt Maud, inquisitively.

"We are going to talk over the arrangements for our wedding."

"Then you have decided to get married soon?"

"Yes, while you are here."

"And return with us? That will be fine, won't it, Charles?" she said, excitedly.

"We won't promise to return with you," said Fred. "I want Mabel to show me some of the curious spots and quaint old churches she has told me about."

"Oh, dear," sighed Aunt Maud, "I wish I was a bride again. Wouldn't I just drag you from pillar to post sight-seeing!"

"You do that now, and always will, I suppose," said Uncle Charles.

"You seem to enjoy it as much as I do, sir."

"Of course I do, especially the meat shops."

"I suppose I'll never hear the end of that, Charles. Let us go back to our plans. Why can't we go on the morning train?" asked Aunt Maud.

"We can," said Mr. Lloyd. "I intended to go with you."

"That's just what we need," answered Charles. "I feel like some stray dog going around without a guide. I have forgotten how to travel in my native land."

"Then we will decide on the morning train."

"I am glad that stupendous question is settled," called out Mabel.

They arrived in London in time for lunch. After that they walked around, Mr. Lloyd pointing out many interesting monuments.

The two brothers talked over old times and changes that had taken place since they parted years ago.

At length they came to several noted buildings, which Mr. Lloyd named for the benefit of Aunt Maud, the principal of which was the Bank of England.

"And this is where we stop. This is the Royal Exchange," he explained. "It was built in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It is the third of the name, two having been burnt and rebuilt."

But Aunt Maud did not seem to be the least interested in it.

As they passed through the Exchange, and up the broad stairway to Lloyd's. Mr. Lloyd pointed with true British pride to a marble statue of Queen Victoria.

"It is very beautiful," was all Aunt Maud could say.

Somehow this dignified brother-in-law was too much for her spirits. She was always afraid of appearing frivolous to him. Charles, too, felt the depressing effect of his dignity, and wished for Mabel's company.

At last they came to Lloyd's rooms.

They were courteously received by one of the leading men, to whom Mr. Lloyd explained the object of the visit, at the same time introducing Aunt Maud as the first American Lloyd.

The gentleman took them to the library, and showed them many rare policies, one being especially so. It was a policy on the life and freedom of Napoleon I.

He then escorted them to see some odd black oak furniture made from the wreck of a man-of-war that was lost during the last century.

All this was extremely interesting to Uncle Charles, but somehow Aunt Maud had lost all the ardor for sight-seeing.

The exalted way Mr. Lloyd had of dwelling on the superiority of British institutions nettled her. "Just as if we did not have anything to show! I'd first like to escort

him to Bunker Hill Monument and tell him what it represents."

After enlarging on the virtues of other buildings adjacent to the Exchange, they wended their way toward the hotel, Aunt Maud being anxious to get back and rest.

When they reached their rooms, she threw her gloves on the table and said, savagely, "Well, I'm glad that's over with."

"Why, Maud, what's the matter with you? I never saw you in such a bad humor."

"Oh, Charles, I'm just ready to explode," she said warmly.

"My dear Maud, do tell me what's the cause of all this."

"That brother of yours, just lording it over us. We have just as fine buildings to show people. The way he raved over those oak beams in the building made me tired. I didn't care whether they were oak or mahogany."

"You must not mind him, Maud; he has never left home in his life; so he does not know what other parts of the world contain. Whatever you do, my dear, don't clash with him. We have had such an enjoyable visit. I would not like anything to come up that would mar it."

"I'll do anything you ask me, Charles, you're such a dear; but just let me talk this off. I feel like an engine overloaded with steam."

"Just blow it off, Maud," he laughed.

"I know it's foolish of me to get so worked up, Charles, but Mabel was so nice about explaining things."

"Yes," answered Charles; "she did not squeeze the eagle until he screamed."

When they came down to dinner they found Mr. Lloyd reading the *London Times*. He informed them that he did not care to go out in the night air. "But maybe Maud," he continued, "might like to see some play."

He handed the paper to Charles, who looked over the announcements and picked out a play that they were both anxious to see.

While they were dressing Aunt Maud finished her dis-

cussion of the trip. She was now thoroughly restored to good humor, and remarked:

"He's not so bad after all."

"Who," said Charles.

"Your brother, of course."

"No. He means well, Maud, and he really likes you in his own way."

"Well, I'm thankful it's his way and not yours."

It was late when they returned home, so they did not see Mr. Lloyd until breakfast time next morning.

"Good morning," he said cheerily to them as they entered the room. "How did you enjoy the play, Maud?"

"It was just splendid," she answered.

"Do you feel equal to visiting Windsor Castle this morning?"

"Yes," responded Charles, "we are ready for anything."

"Then, if you are willing, we will start as soon after breakfast as possible."

They had a merry time over the meal, Aunt Maud having quite forgotten her resentment toward her brother-in-law.

"After all," as Uncle Charles told her, "it was just your patriotism pitted against his."

The town of Windsor was twenty-three miles from London. They reached it in time for lunch. After viewing the Park, they went to Windsor Castle.

Mr. Lloyd gave them a vast amount of information in his stately way. He took them to the royal apartments, and thence to St. George's Chapel, where so many of England's kings and queens are buried. They inspected monuments and paintings until Aunt Maud declared her neck was out of joint. At length Mr. Lloyd turned their steps toward the royal stables, he being, like all Englishmen, a great lover of equine beauty.

He held the royal horses in high esteem, but Uncle Charles and Aunt Maud thought them very ordinary looking animals, but were both very careful not to hurt his British pride by belittling them.

Aunt Maud was glad next day when they took the train

for home, and overjoyed when Fred and Mabel met them at the station.

"Why, Aunt, what's the matter with you? You look so serious."

The tears welled up in Aunt Maud's eyes.

"Oh, nothing, Mabel, only I am so tired."

They dropped behind the rest of the party and Aunt Maud poured her woes into Mabel's willing ears.

"You poor darling," said Mabel sympathetically. "I wish I had gone with you. You're not used to father's ways, that's all. He is just as affectionate and warm-hearted as Uncle Charles, only you don't understand him like we do."

"I suppose not," said Aunt Maud, apologetically.

"What secrets are you two exchanging," called out Fred. "I'm getting jealous."

They were almost at the house now, and could see Mrs. Lloyd waving her lace handkerchief to her husband, her straight form appearing rigid in the distance. She greeted them all with what Aunt Maud called a peck instead of a kiss.

"How good that fire looks," said Aunt Maud, enthusiastically. "I have been shivering ever since I left."

"There's one thing evident; you need me to take care of you," said Mabel. "You're not fit to travel alone."

The maid brought in the tea, and Aunt Maud declared nothing ever tasted so good to her. After she had unburdened her sorrow, and had been refreshed with the tea, Aunt Maud was her old self again.

"Tell me, Mabel, what you have been doing in our absence?"

"Planning all kinds of things for our wedding. Mamma wants me to be married in the simple, old fashioned way of her girlhood, and Fred and I feel the same about it. Neither of us care for an elaborate display."

"I am glad you decided on following your mother's footsteps," said Mr. Lloyd.

"What do you think about it, Aunt Maud?"

"I am almost afraid to say, Mabel. We are so fond of

show and newspaper notices that we would not think we were being married properly without them."

"That's where we differ, Maud. Our social life is our own, and not the public's; and again, marriage with us still holds its sanctity. We do not sever the sacred tie as readily as you do," observed Mrs. Lloyd.

They resumed the discussion of the arrangements for the wedding.

"I am going to be married," continued Mabel, "in white swiss and have six of my girl friends for my bridesmaids. They, too, will be dressed in white and carry armfuls of snowdrops and ferns."

"You will be married in London, I suppose?" asked Aunt Maud.

"Oh, no," answered Mabel. "Here at home, in our own village church, where all my life has been spent. We will be married at noon, and have a choral service."

"What! Married in the day time!" exclaimed Aunt Maud.

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Lloyd. "We rarely marry any other time."

"On returning from the church, the wedding breakfast will take place, followed by a reception. In the evening there will be bonfires and illuminations and the tenant's ball."

"That does not sound very simple," said Aunt Maud.

"It will be, my dear, in the way it is carried out," answered Mrs. Lloyd, pleasantly.

"And when will this all take place, Mabel?"

"Three weeks from to-morrow, Aunt Maud."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Aunt Maud. "I won't hardly have time to get ready."

"If the bride can, you surely can," said Uncle Charles.

Next day Aunt Maud made a trip to London, ordering an elaborate gown for the occasion, returning late in the evening.

The wedding was now the only subject of conversation. Preparations were being made on all sides, Aunt Maud going to vastly more trouble and expense than the bride.

Mrs. Lloyd brought out her silver gray satin, shaking out the folds carefully. She had worn it only a short time before at a niece's wedding, and at Mabel's request, she was going to wear it at hers.

"You looked so lovely in it, mamma," said Mabel.

Mrs. Lloyd smiled at Mabel's interest in her.

"Where do I come in in all the fine doings?" laughed Fred.

"Nowhere," responded Aunt Maud. "Who ever heard of the bridegroom looking handsome in his low-cut vest, or of sweeping gracefully up the aisle in his dress suit? No, Fred, you will find you are only an adjunct to the wedding."

"Oh, well," laughed Fred, "so long as I get there, I ought to be satisfied, I suppose."

Everyone was kept busy, there being plenty for all to do. Mabel was a special favorite among the friends of the family, and each vied in outdoing the other in preparing for this great event in Mabel's life. A little band of village children were being initiated into the duties of flower girls. It was to be their privilege to strew flowers in the bride's path, as she entered the quaint little village church. This was a labor of love, for no one was as generally beloved in the village as Mabel. She had always been a favorite since her childhood. Now they all wanted to shower on her all kinds of good wishes and were each eager to take a hand in the festivities.

"Mabel," said Fred, coming into the room, "could you spare me about two minutes of your valuable time?"

"Certainly, Fred. I believe I could almost give you ten."

"I just wanted to ask you about inviting Harry and Elsie to our wedding."

"Isn't that odd? Mamma is just now writing to them, and our friends that live near them, to come, and we were wondering if it would not be apropos to ask Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, too."

"It's very good of your mother to remember them. I'd like very much to have them. They made my visit so pleasant while I was at their home. You would like them, too, Mabel. They are fine people."

"Let us go to mamma and talk it over," said Mabel.

Mrs. Lloyd was only too pleased to include the Nichols.

"How would it do, Fred," she said, "if you went and gave them a personal invitation?"

"I might just as well. I seem to be of no special use here, to anyone or in any place."

"Really," said Mrs. Lloyd, "I told my husband yesterday that I did not think he and Charles were very hospitable to you. But you know how it is, Fred. It's a great many years since they have met, and something is always coming up that they remembered in their youth and they get to discussing it, and become so interested that they seem to be in oblivion regarding the rest of us."

"I don't mind it at all, Mrs. Lloyd. Mabel gives me all her spare time, which I consider very generous of her, considering the constant demand there is on it. I find plenty of amusement rambling in the fields and lanes."

"Never mind, Fred," said Mrs. Lloyd, "you will soon have her all to yourself, and then we will be the ones that will feel deserted."

"I promise you, Mrs. Lloyd, that I will never keep Mabel from you any length of time. She and I are good sailors and the ocean has no terrors for us."

"That is really good of you to be so considerate, Fred. Her father and I think we are extremely fortunate in the choice of a son-in-law."

"Thank you," said Fred. "I hope I will be able always to merit such confidence as you now have in me."

"Just fancy," cried Mabel, rushing into the room, "the tenants are preparing a triumphal arch in the way to the church for us to pass under. Isn't that nice of them, mamma?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Lloyd, "your father has always been an exemplary landlord, and has cared for them as he would for his own; and now they are anxious to do honor to his only child. They asked our permission several days ago."

"Then you knew of it before, mamma?"

"Yes, Mabel. We did not tell you, as we knew there

would be more pleasure in your finding out for yourself all the good wishes, even the poorest, are showering on you. That arch is to be a tribute of love to you. They have always held you in high esteem and feel very bad to think you are going so far from us."

"They don't understand, mamma, that it only takes a few days now to cross the Atlantic. We are going to come home ever so often. Are we not, Fred?" she said, as she cast a glance at him.

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "it won't be my fault if you don't keep in touch with your parents."

"Come, Fred, let us take a little walk. I am dying to get out in the fields again." So saying, they left the room.

Mrs. Lloyd watched them for a few minutes, then her eyes filled with tears.

"I really can't bear the thought of how we can endure our lives without Mabel. It will be very lonely, but it would be selfish of us, in the extreme, to deny her the happiness of a home of her own."

In the meantime Aunt Maud was up to her eyes in finery. She was determined to outdo herself.

"I never did look like anything in quiet colors. Simplicity is not my strong point, Charles," she said, as he suggested she follow the rest of the wedding party in the matter of wearing simply made white gowns.

"Why, Charles, I've never had a chance to wear my diamonds but once. They don't wear them at church here, nor even on the street. I was afraid to take them to London for fear of their being stolen. I suppose a wedding won't be like a regular service, so I will have a chance to wear them."

"You had better ask Mabel," said Uncle Charles. "She will know what is *au fait*."

"She will say just like you do, go simply gowned. It's all right for the girls here, with their rose leaf complexions. They would look well even in a dairy maid's costume, but I don't. I must have something to help me out."

"Then just use your own judgment. You always make a good appearance, and that's the main point, is it not?"

"It is with me, Charles."

Having settled it, she went back to her room to work out the arduous problem of what to wear.

Mabel and Fred came in from their walk loaded with violets and looking as happy as two children.

"Oh, how fragrant!" exclaimed Mrs. Lloyd.

"The lanes are just overflowing with violets and snow-drops, mamma. We picked until we were tired."

Aunt Maud came running down stairs on hearing Mabel's voice, and on entering the hall met Mabel and Fred going toward the dining-room with their arms full of violets.

"Was there ever anything so lovely," she exclaimed. "Why, Mabel, those would cost you not a cent less than twenty-five dollars in New York."

"There you are again, Maud, always putting a price on everything," said Uncle Charles.

"Well, you know, Charles, that's so. It always costs that at least for a violet luncheon."

"Then we are going to have a luncheon for less than cost," laughed Mabel.

"I don't believe I could enjoy flowers half so much unless I could pick them myself," said Mabel.

Mabel arranged the flowers while Aunt Maud stood watching her deft fingers.

"You ought to have been an artist, Mabel," she said. "Your handling of flowers would bring you a fortune."

"Money again," called out Uncle Charles, who had just entered the room.

"I come from a money mad nation," responded Aunt Maud, laughingly, "and the instinct will keep cropping out. I must try and be like Mabel, see only the beautiful and spiritual in the things of life without measuring their money value."

"By George," said Uncle Charles, "I must get off my mail to-day. I am getting so lazy since I came here. You take everything so easy I am doing the same."

"I must do the same," said Fred. "I have not yet told my best friends how soon I am going to be married."

"You can do that after lunch," said Mabel, "as Aunt

Maud and I are going into consultation about the decorations. We don't want to leave everything until the last."

"About how soon can you go to the Nelsons?" asked Mrs. Lloyd of Fred, when they were eating their lunch.

"I think it would be best to go to-morrow," he replied. "I am going to ask Harry to be my best man, and want to see him and find out whether he has any engagement for that week."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lloyd, "I want them all to stay the whole week. Mabel wants to give a farewell dinner to her friends, also a luncheon to her bridesmaids and several teas. I would like them to be here to enjoy them. Don't forget to include the Nichols, who are the Nelson's guests."

"All right," answered Fred; "I'll remember them all. I am just as anxious as you are to have them come. I want Mabel to meet Elsie."

Next morning Fred started out to make the visit, having first sent word so that they would know of his intention. He was met at the train by Harry, who was overjoyed at seeing him again.

"Oh, say, Fred, I'm so glad you're going to marry Miss Lloyd. If I had not met Elsie I'd have taken her myself. I was rather soft on her, you know."

"It was lucky for me you found Elsie, wasn't it?" said Fred, slyly.

"Now don't try to make fun of me; but it was a fact, Fred. I was awfully gone on her."

"More than she was on you, I think," Fred replied.

"Oh, well, I don't care now," said Harry; "Elsie's just great. She loves me to death."

"A rather pleasant death, isn't it, Harry?"

"Say, there she is now waving her hand to me."

"Where?" said Fred. "Right on the lawn," answered Harry.

Fred raised his hat and waved it at her. She ran down the walk to meet them.

"It's just lovely of you, Mr. Fairchild, to come and see us. Father and mother are so anxious to meet you again."

"Oh, say, Fred, dad's just tumbling all over himself to

be nice to Elsie; and the mater is always hugging her. She says I displayed excellent taste."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Fred, "was there ever another Elsie!"

"Now, Fred, you ought to know how a fellow feels when the only girl for him is with him all the time."

"Yes, I understand your raptures. Mabel is the only girl for me. Harry, you ought to see how pretty she has grown since you saw her last."

"I'd like to see her again," said Harry.

"You will have a chance, as that was the reason of my visit to you. We are going to be married in ten days."

"Say, Elsie, Fred's going to be married."

"So are we, aren't we, Harry dear?"

"But he is going to be married in ten days, and goodness only knows when we will be. Elsie's father has relatives in Cumberland and they are going to visit them," said Harry dejectedly.

"Oh, dear," sighed Elsie, "we may have to wait months. Since Harry's mother has him back she's like father about it, always says there's time enough. You're only children yet."

"She wanted us to get married before we left. It's your father's doings, Elsie," said Harry. "The mater was all in for it until he talked her out of our marrying just yet. I can't wait much longer, Elsie. How do I know but what some of those Cumberland Lake fellows will be wanting to get you away from me."

"Well, they won't; that's all there's about it," replied Elsie. "I'll promise you, honor bright, I won't get married while I'm gone."

By this time they reached the house. The Nelsons and Nichols greeted Fred warmly. As soon as he found a chance, he told them of his errand.

"Yes," said Mrs. Nelson, "Mabel's mother wrote to me some time ago about your marriage, but said nothing definite had been planned yet."

"It's very kind of her to include us," said Mrs. Nichols.

"Say, mater, isn't it awfully jolly of Fred to want me

for his best man? It will be just the thing for me. I'll know how it feels to be second best fellow at a wedding."

"Next time you will be 'It,' as we say in America."

"Say, that's all right, Fred. I'll try and remember that. Did you hear that, Elsie?"

"Yes, indeed, I did, Harry. It's like playing tag, isn't it?"

Toward evening George and his wife joined the party. They had been off visiting all day.

"Why, Fred," said George, heartily, "I can shut my eyes and almost see Ceylon."

"That reminds me, Harry, if you wish us to see you married, you will have to hurry. The next steamer leaves in six weeks and we will have to leave on it."

"My goodness," cried Elsie, "you must stay and see us married. I want everyone to be there."

"Could you be ready in six weeks' time?" asked Harry.

"I could, if father would let me."

"Tell him he must," responded Harry.

"You do it; you're the bravest," said Elsie.

Nothing daunted, Harry started off to find her father.

He was seated in an armchair perusing a letter.

"Well, my boy, what is it?" he queried, as Harry told him he would like to speak to him.

After Harry explained what he wanted, he promised him he would decide in the morning.

"I have a letter here that states my business needs attention, and I, too, will have to leave on the same steamer with George.

Harry was elated. They could not possibly have the heart to take his Elsie away from him.

As soon as he told Elsie the news, she said, "Harry, that settles it. I won't go back unless you come, too."

"I can't go, because I promised the mater I would stay with her."

"Then I'll stay, too," said Elsie, decidedly.

Fred stayed a day visiting with them. They accepted his invitation, given in Mrs. Lloyd's name, for a week's visit.

"That will mean we must leave in two days' time."

In the morning Fred returned to the Lloyd's home with the news of their acceptance.

The arrangements for the wedding being completed, they were all at liberty to entertain their guests. When the morning train brought them, they found the whole family there to meet them. Mabel and Elsie were introduced and walked off together.

"Say, but they're handsome girls," remarked Harry to Fred. "Elsie's hair is just like gold."

"How about Mabel's?" asked Fred. "It's even more beautiful than Elsie's."

"Yes," reluctantly admitted Harry. "But don't you think Elsie's eyes are the bluest?"

"Yes, I'll admit they are, Harry," said Fred. "They are as you say, two handsome girls. We ought to consider ourselves lucky to get such attractive partners."

By this time they reached the house.

Mrs. Lloyd graciously assigned them to their rooms.

"I will be glad when it's all over, Charles," said Aunt Maud. "What a house full of people and how easily they dispose of their guests. How do they do it?"

"They allow them to adjust themselves, I think," said Uncle Charles. "It seems to come natural to them to slip into their places."

The week was spent in dinners, luncheons and teas, until, as Aunt Maud declared, they seemed to be forever eating.

At length the eve of the wedding came. The house was beautifully decorated, and everything in readiness.

As Mabel and Fred viewed the decorations, the former said, "I can hardly believe this is all for you and me."

"And to think," said Fred, "by this time to-morrow you will be all mine. It seems too good to be true."

The morning of the wedding dawned bright and sunshiny. The birds sang merrily and it seemed as if everyone was happy.

After a late breakfast the guests repaired to their rooms to dress.

Mrs. Lloyd insisting on putting the finishing touches to

Mabel's toilet herself, said pathetically, "It may be the last time I will be privileged to do so."

After leaving Mabel, Mrs. Lloyd gently tapped on Aunt Maud's door to inquire if she were ready. She invited her to come in.

Mrs. Lloyd almost gasped, so resplendent was Aunt Maud in a handsome gown of the softest silk of the shade known as ashes of roses, elaborately trimmed with point de Venise lace and pearl passementerie. Her hair was beautifully dressed and surmounted with a diamond tiara, diamonds were in her ears and at her throat.

"Don't I look stunning?" she exclaimed.

Mrs. Lloyd raised her lorgnette and surveyed her slowly.

"You certainly do look regal, Maud. You have a queenly presence."

"You don't know what a comfort it is to get a chance to air my diamonds," said Aunt Maud, gaily.

"Why don't you wear yours?" she said, addressing her sister-in-law.

"I haven't any, Maud. I never cared much for jewelry some how."

"Isn't that strange, and you so wealthy. I am different. I just love dress and jewels. I am never so happy as when I know I am well dressed."

"Well, my dear, we are all waiting for you."

Aunt Maud gave a farewell glance into the mirror, and followed Mrs. Lloyd out of the room.

As Mabel descended the stairs, the guests cast many admiring glances at the fresh young girlish bride. As she walked out to the waiting carriage, everything being in readiness, they drove to the church.

Harry had already taken his place with Fred to await the bride.

As she passed under the arch of greenery, the village children strewed her path with flowers. Never was a bride so favored with looks and friends.

The organ pealed out its sonorous notes of welcome as Mabel entered the church. Sweet singers breathed their love for her in song of perfect melody, giving way to the

grand volume of sound, as the wedding march resounded through the church.

When the bridal party reached their places, a hushed stillness came over everyone, as the sacred words that made them man and wife were uttered. Then a joyous burst of melody from the organ greeted them as they walked down the aisle. On entering the carriage they were driven rapidly to the house, where they received the congratulations of their friends.

When all the guests had arrived, the wedding breakfast was partaken of.

After this, the bride and groom received the good wishes of the villagers. This continued until dark, when the tenants' ball was to take place, the bride and groom remaining to open it with the first dance.

After this they quietly slipped away to change their wedding garments for traveling suits. But on making their way to the carriage, they found their friends waiting for them. Amidst a shower of rice they reached the carriage after a gallant rush, and were soon out of reach of their friends, not telling anyone where the honeymoon was to be spent.

Now that it was all over, Mrs. Lloyd collapsed. Her husband led her away tenderly, leaving Aunt Maud and Uncle Charles to attend to the visiting guests.

In a few days they found themselves alone again, the guests having all left for their homes.

Aunt Maud interested herself examining the beautiful presents that were sent to Mabel and Fred, which Mrs. Lloyd was carefully packing up preparatory to removing to a place of safety until such time as Mabel would leave for her new home.

"This box," said Mrs. Lloyd, pointing to one on the table, "came this morning; it's from America and is addressed to Fred. So I will leave it for him to open. I suppose it's from some of his friends."

Aunt Maud was very anxious to open it and see what it contained, but Mrs. Lloyd's scruples would not permit it. So it was laid away until their return, which would be in

a week, as Uncle Charles declared he must return home by the first steamer, and wanted to see Mabel and Fred before they left.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BON VOYAGE.

Mrs. Lloyd and Maud, being left all to themselves, spent the time in visiting points of interest near home. Now that Mrs. Lloyd understood Maud's ways, she enjoyed her company. Her observant nature was quick to see her good qualities. Her love for Mabel won Mrs. Lloyd's friendship better than anything else possibly could. And now that the time for her departure was close at hand, she really regretted to see her go.

But Uncle Charles was obdurate. "We must be ready by the end of the week, Maud," he said. "The steamer sails on Monday morning. I have the tickets and you must have your trunks packed and off to London Saturday, for you could not get a trunk hauled here on Sunday for love or money. All we will have to do then will be to carry our suitcases with us on the train."

"Oh, Charles, I just hate to leave here. We have had such a lovely time together. I have been trying to persuade your brother to make us a visit, but he seems to dread the distance."

"I believe he would be miserable over there, Maud. You notice how the people in the village move aside to let him pass. You know how long he would wait in New York for that to happen."

"Why, Charles, he would be swept bodily on. There's no time for such courtesies. Just think," said Maud, "how his British blood would boil at such treatment."

"We are the ones that will have to do the visiting. Brother is too old to change his ways now."

"If I have to pack, I'll begin right away," said Maud. "It will take some time. Ta, ta, Charles," she said, as she tripped up the stairs.

She placed her dresses on the bed, and began to gather up the rest of her belongings.

"Is it possible I brought all these clothes with me," she thought, as she looked first at the bewildering array of costumes, shoes, parasols, to say nothing of the endless amount of trifles she had gathered up. And then at the two trunks.

She sat thinking for some time, and figuring where she would put them all. Then suddenly jumping up, she ran to the head of the stairs and called lustily for Charles. On his answering, she said, "It can't be done, Charles."

"What can't be done? The packing?"

"Why, it must, my dear."

"They won't fit!"

"What won't fit, Maud?"

"Why, the clothes of course. You just come and see."

Charles mounted the stairs gaily, but on entering the room his face fell. He surveyed the heterogeneous mass of finery and then thought a minute.

"It's the worst mathematical problem I ever was up against, Maud. Suppose," he said, "we put some of these," pointing to her dresses, "into a packing case and ship them as freight."

"Ship my gowns as freight! Why, Charles, you must be crazy."

"Then put the shoes and parasols in a box."

"And tear all the lace on my sunshades? Never, Charles, I won't even consider such a proposition."

"Well, let us put it on a business basis then. All you need for the voyage lay to one side, and the rest I'll jam into one of the trunks."

"You'll jam nothing, sir. Everything must be laid away carefully."

"You'd better send for an undertaker then."

"Now, Charles, don't lose your temper. Just take the matter philosophically."

"Yes, and never get back until next summer. No," said Charles, irately; "I'll tackle this job or die."

Maud sorted all she needed for the voyage, while Charles

folded the remainder, and packed the trunk. When it was finished, he gazed at it triumphantly.

"Look, Maud! How's that for style,"

She looked at the neatly packed trunk, saying, "You're certainly a wonder, Charles. I could not have done that in a lifetime."

"Now for the other trunk, Maud."

She having folded the gowns, it took only a short time to put them in place. He then packed the small things.

"There's room for more yet, Maud."

"Is there; I wish I had time to make a few purchases, Charles."

"Isn't that like a woman. I no sooner get out of one scrape than she is planning to get me into another. Where are the ropes, Maud? Let us finish the job."

She handed them to him, and in no time he had the trunks roped and in the hall ready for the express.

"Thank goodness that's done!" ejaculated Maud. "Every woman ought to have a husband; they're so handy in emergencies like this."

"Charles," called Mr. Lloyd, "here is some mail."

"Who is it for," asked Maud.

"Everyone," answered Mr. Lloyd.

They both hurried down stairs eager to read their letters.

"Here's a letter from Mabel and Fred. They will meet you at the steamer on Monday morning to say good bye to you."

Charles hardly heard this, so absorbed was he in the perusal of his letters.

Maud's were ones from her friends whom she enjoyed hearing from.

Charles looked up at last and said, "I am glad I decided to take the next steamer home. My business needs my attention. Things always go wrong when one goes away." He did not mention what the trouble was, and no one asked him, thinking probably it was nothing serious.

Monday came all too soon. The Lloyds were bustling about early that morning. Charles and Maud hurried

through their breakfast, and were driven to the train, reaching it just in time. As soon as they arrived in London, Mr. Lloyd hailed two cabs, in which they were driven to the dock, where they found Mabel and Fred waiting for them.

Mabel embraced her father and mother affectionately, Fred shaking hands with everyone.

Charles and Maud expressed themselves pleased with Mabel's and Fred's thoughtfulness in coming to wish them good bye.

They all chatted pleasantly, Charles and Maud thanking Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd for their kindness to them during their visit and expressing a hope that before long they would all meet again.

The gong sounded for everyone to go ashore. Relatives and friends said their last good byes and hastily left the steamer. Ropes were cast off and the steamer gradually floated out into the stream.

Soon puffs of smoke rose from the smokestack; a few turns of the propellers, and she was already headed for sea.

They waved their handkerchiefs as long as they could see anyone. The outline grew dimmer and dimmer, leaving only the dark hull to be seen.

The Lloyds turned homeward, taking Mabel and Fred with them.

They all felt saddened by the fact that they would probably be a long time apart.

Fred and Mabel seemed overflowing with happiness. They spent the time during their absence in a quaint little village not far from London.

"As soon as Elsie and Harry are married, I would like to see more of rural England," said Fred. Mabel and I are in no particular hurry to go back. The ocean trip will be pleasanter later on."

Fred and Mabel had discussed this while they were gone, and concluded that Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd would feel the parting less, by seeing them at intervals before the final separation came. Fred had become greatly attached to Mabel's parents, he having no clear remembrance of his

own. He felt their home would always be like his own, and looked forward to many pleasant visits with them.

"Here we are," said Mr. Lloyd, as the train stopped at the station.

Their carriage was waiting for them, and soon they were home again.

Mabel missed Aunt Maud and Uncle Charles very much; but Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd were so happy over Mabel's return they could think of nothing else.

Late in the afternoon Mrs. Lloyd came to where Fred and Mabel were in the garden, saying, "I forgot to tell you, Fred, that a box arrived from America for you the morning after you left. It's in the library."

"Come, Mabel," he said, "let us see what's in it."

They walked into the house, and on opening it found it contained handsome gifts from the Pembertons and Tom.

After they had admired their elegance and were placing them back in their cases, Fred's hand struck something.

"Why here's something else!"

On removing the wrappings he found a handsomely bound book inscribed "With best regards of Jamie Mulligan."

"Bless Jamie," said Fred. "Who would have expected that he would remember me? I suppose he gave it to Esther for me."

He explained to them all his and Esther's interest in Jamie.

"Here's your mail, too, Fred. I don't know how I came to be so forgetful, unless it was all the excitement I have been through to-day seeing Maud and Charles off and your returning," said Mrs. Lloyd, as she handed it to him.

"Ah! here's one from Tom. That comes first." So saying, he opened it and smilingly read the contents.

"Mabel, dear," he said, looking up, "here's all kinds of good wishes for our happiness from Tom Seymour and the Pemberton family. He notifies us of the box being sent. The book was brought by Jamie to Esther to be forwarded to me. This book means a great deal to me, Mabel. I made a life-long friend the day I met Jamie. He would be

faithful to me if I had not a dollar, I know. I make great predictions for him, and I believe they will come true. He will one day be one of our leading business men. It's in him and bound to come out."

Glancing over the balance of his mail, he found they were just business letters. So putting them into his pocket, he remarked, "I am glad things are going well with Tom. You will be delighted with Esther, Mabel. Tom says they are impatient to meet you. Esther and her mother want us to visit them."

"I will be very glad to meet your friends, Fred. But listen! there is the dinner bell. I don't know how you feel, but I feel starved."

Fred admitted he felt a little that way himself. The dinner was a merry affair. Both Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd seemed to feel Mabel's and Fred's happiness. The latter was already getting into Mabel's lively ways. His life had been spent so much alone that he had grown serious beyond his years. Now that he was in Mabel's company, he was getting gay and boyish.

The evening was spent talking over their trip, which they regretted to have hurried through.

"But we felt we must see Aunt Maud and Uncle Charles off," said Fred. "We are going to devote ourselves to seeing the country now in a leisurely manner, just sauntering around wherever our fancy leads us."

"I think that will be an ideal way," responded Mrs. Lloyd.

"Mabel says the fields and lanes are beautiful everywhere at this time of the year," said Fred.

"They are indeed," answered Mr. Lloyd.

"In my younger days there was nothing I enjoyed as much as a brisk walk of several miles."

Fred laughed and said, "I never was much of a walker, but I find Mabel is training me to be quite a sprinter. We don't walk enough, I know," continued Fred. "Our cars are too handy, no matter where we go we find one ready to step on, and naturally ride."

"It's getting late," said Mrs. Lloyd, and I think we had better retire."

Wishing each other good night, they left the room.

Soon after breakfast next morning, Mabel and Fred took a walk to the village. Everywhere they were greeted cordially. They chatted here and there with friends, until the striking of the village clock reminded them that it was noon. They turned their steps toward home. When almost there, they heard sounds of laughter issuing from the house.

"Who can that possibly be?" said Mabel.

The sounds were repeated.

"Why, it's Harry Nelson. Now for some fun," laughed Fred.

They hardly reached the entrance to the home when Harry rushed out to meet them.

"Say! you two just look fine," he said, by way of greeting. "Fred, I have lots to tell you."

"All right," answered Fred. "I'm ready to hear it. But let us go into the house and sit down. We are pretty tired."

They entered, and after getting seated, were ready to hear the news.

He told them how Mr. and Mrs. Nichols had consented to let him and Elsie get married before they left for Ceylon.

"It's going to be a hurry up affair. Elsie and her father and mother have gone to the Cumberland Lakes for a week's visit, and as soon as they return, we will be married. So you see, Fred, you did not get so much ahead of us after all. It's just this way," continued Harry, "Elsie's father and mother want to get home. So does George. So the mater suggested we have just a quiet wedding, no fuss or anything. You know dad's pretty feeble, and too much excitement might upset him. There are just going to be our two fathers and mothers, George and Geraldine, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd, you and your wife and, of course, Elsie and I. It's going to be awfully quiet, but so long as I get Elsie I don't care. We are going off for a honeymoon," continued Harry. "But we are not like you, Fred. We are going to London. Elsie and I would rather look in the shop windows and go to the parks and Zoo. We don't care a rap about country lanes and that sort of thing. We

want to have a jolly good time. They all laugh at us for choosing such a honeymoon, but we don't care. We are going to have a grand time."

"Where are you going to live?" asked Fred.

"With dad and the mater. They think it's best, and so do Mr. and Mrs. Nichols. It doesn't matter to us where we live, so long as we are together. Say, Fred, I was pretty nearly forgetting to tell you the day, and that's what I came for. It's next Wednesday. Don't forget to be there, all of you, remember," said Harry.

"We will be there, all right," said Fred. "I wouldn't miss it for a fortune. I'll stand by you, Harry."

"That's right, Fred. I'm 'It'—ha! ha! Say, that's great, isn't it. Just hits the situation, doesn't it?"

Mrs. Lloyd persuaded Harry to stay over night, as Elsie was off visiting with her parents. He readily consented. "There was nothing to attract him home," he sighed.

They enjoyed his visit. His bubbling enthusiasm seemed infectious, for soon everyone was laughing at Harry's infatuation for Elsie. In the morning he left for home, after having exacted a promise from all not to forget Wednesday next.

After Harry had left, his approaching wedding was naturally discussed.

Mr. Lloyd told them of a talk he had with Mr. Nichols the week he was visiting them prior to Mabel's marriage. He, Mr. Nichols, was of the opinion that it was just as well to let Elsie and Harry get married now as at any time. "For my part," he said, "I would not want to take Elsie home in her present state of mind. I know if we separated her from Harry, we would only be making our own lives a burden. They are both very young, to be sure, but matrimony will settle them down quicker than anything."

"And," said Mr. Lloyd, "I think what he said was very reasonable. There's quite a difference in people. Some are born old, others never get old. I think Harry and Elsie will be of the latter class; they will always be young."

I am glad Mr. Nichols looks at it the way he does. I think the young people would take it very much to heart if they were separated. As Harry charged us, we must not forget next Wednesday."

It did not take long for the appointed time to come, and Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd, together with Mabel and Fred, went to the Nelson home, arriving there a short time before the wedding.

Although Harry assured them it was to be very quiet, the home was beautifully decorated.

Elsie looked charming in her girlish white silk frock.

They drove to the church and found there quite a gathering of the townspeople. After the simple service was over, they drove home, where a wedding breakfast awaited them. It seemed as if it was all over so quickly.

Contrary to everyone's expectations, Harry and Elsie were very subdued, quite awed, in fact, by the ceremony. They remained very quiet during the breakfast.

It was not until they were showered with rice, at their departure, that the serious look left their faces.

It was Harry who broke the spell by remarking how it took more nerve to get married than he thought. Elsie burst into tears at this and said she thought so, too.

"Never mind, dear," said Harry soothingly, "we won't do it again," causing everyone to roar with laughter.

This restored Harry and Elsie to good humor, and they enjoyed the laugh with the rest.

As the carriage drove off, Harry and Elsie waved their hands and were soon out of sight.

The Lloyds stayed until evening, visiting with the Nelsons. On departing for home, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson urged them to come again as soon as Harry and Elsie returned and have a visit all together, before the Nichols and George and his wife would leave for their homes in Ceylon.

They thanked them cordially and promised to do so.

Harry and Elsie reached London at dusk and drove to the hotel, Mr. Nichols having secured rooms for them. They enjoyed a hearty dinner and then went to the theatre.

Next day was spent as they planned, looking in the shop windows. They walked along the Strand, gazing at everything that came under their notice, Harry remarking:

"Talk about your country lanes! They are not in it with this."

They stopped and watched the "Punch and Judy" show like two children. They visited the zoo and fed the animals nuts. There was nothing they missed. On seeing a train time table for the underground tunnel under the Thames, they read it.

"Let's go," said Elsie, gleefully.

"All right," said Harry.

They bought the tickets for the underground railway. It was a novel experience to them; although they both were born so near London, they had never traveled on it.

When they got off the cars the crowd was so great that they managed to get separated. Harry rushed one way and then another, calling for Elsie, but no Elsie could be found.

At last, bordering on distraction, he rushed up to one of the officials begging him to find Elsie.

"Who's Elsie?" asked the man gruffly.

"My wife!" said Harry.

"Your wife!"

"Oh, yes, sir; find her. Do please! We've only been married two days."

"A blind man could see that," said the official, turning away.

"You're awfully rude," said Harry, walking off.

"There she is!" he cried. "My darling Elsie! Where have you been?"

"I've been looking for you," she sobbed.

"And I have been nearly crazy looking for you," said Harry.

"You found her, did you?" said the official.

Harry just glared at him, and taking Elsie by the hand walked off.

"That's a horrid, rude man, Elsie. Don't look at him. He's mean; he wouldn't help me to find you at all."

"We must keep awfully close together after this."

"Yes," continued Harry. "No more underground rail-

way for me. We'll stay on the top of the earth after this."

Their journeyings were resumed to the parks, and from there to all sorts of hitherto unknown places to them. At length, tired out, they decided to remain at the hotel all next day and look out of the windows at the passing crowds. This served to amuse them as much as anything.

Next morning, refreshed and rested up, they started out again. They had not gone far when they encountered a street show. They stopped to watch it. The crowd was large, and as Harry and Elsie worked their way into it, to get a better view, Harry was roughly jostled by a coarse looking man. He tried to get out again, at Elsie's request, but as this was impossible, they stayed and saw it out. Then they returned to the hotel and took lunch. After that they went out to make some trifling purchase. On reaching for his pocketbook, Harry found it gone.

"Elsie, I've been touched!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "My purse is gone."

Elsie felt instinctively for hers; it was there. So she paid for the things and they went out of the shop.

"Now what will we do? I've got no money," said Harry.

"I've got some yet," replied Elsie.

"But that will only be enough to take us home," dejectedly answered Harry.

"Let's go home, Harry."

"I hate to, but I suppose we must, Elsie," said Harry.

"I believe tunnels are unlucky, don't you? I never was robbed before."

"It must have been in that crowd we were in," said Elsie, "when that rough man pushed you."

"Yes; but if we had not got into that tunnel it might never have happened."

Having no money to spend was a terrible blow to Harry. He returned to the hotel and informed the manager of his loss.

"Why not wire to your father?" he suggested. "Your rooms and meals are paid for for ten days."

"Harry," said Elsie, "let us stay the ten days. I'll write to father and tell him all about it."

They decided that would be a good plan. So Elsie wrote

to her father and told him all their troubles. As soon as he received the letter, he came to London and promised to stay with them until it was time to return.

"It's the first time, Harry," he said, "that I ever heard of a young married couple having to have a guardian to take care of them during their honeymoon, though I don't doubt many of them need one."

Now that they had Mr. Nichols with them they were happy.

On inquiring of them what places of interest they had seen, he laughed heartily when they told him how they had spent the time.

"Well, there's all ways of spending a honeymoon, but it seems you chose the most original."

Harry smiled.

"Mr. Nichols, Elsie chose it," said Harry.

"I know now why Fred and Mabel went walking round the country lanes for their honeymoon. It's lots safer. If Fred had been half way decent, he would have put me on to that."

Mr. Nichols showed them many historical places and buildings, explaining their origin and telling many incidents in connection with them. But seeing they cared nothing for it, turned their steps toward Hyde Park.

This took their fancy. There was such a variety of people there. It was just the place to see fine horses. Harry and Elsie were both ardent admirers of a good horse.

Mr. Nichols sat down in the park while they walked around. As he watched them, he thought, "I wish Harry had some of George's stamina. It's a good thing the Nelson property is tied up the way it is, so Harry can only use the income, the principal remaining intact. I am afraid it would soon slip away from him. But after this they will be with Mr. and Mrs. Nelson and will have someone to advise them. They will come out all right, no doubt, when the novelty of it wears off."

As Elsie and Harry showed no signs of returning, Mr. Nichols went to look for them. He found them intently

watching a flirtation between a soldier and a nursemaid, which seemed to tickle their fancy immensely. They were laughing boisterously over it, and it was some time before Mr. Nichols could find out what was so excruciatingly funny. As it was getting late, Mr. Nichols suggested that they return to the hotel.

They rode back on an omnibus, Harry and Elsie taking seats on the top, while Mr. Nichols contented himself with one inside.

The omnibus had not gone far when it suddenly stopped, and down jumped Harry.

Mr. Nichols put his head out to see the cause, and was surprised to see Harry.

"What's gone wrong now?" he queried.

"Oh, Elsie just dropped her parasol, that's all."

But it was enough to delay the bus some minutes. The driver took it good naturedly.

"Dear me," thought Mr. Nichols. "it's more like taking two children for an outing than escorting a married couple."

After putting in a few more days in the same way, Mr. Nichols concluded to go back to the Nelsons.

"We must go home now," he remarked in the morning. "We have quite a number of things to attend to. And, Elsie, your mother wants to come to London to do some shopping. I must go back and bring her."

"Father, couldn't we stay here and wait until you come back? Then we could all go back together."

"Do you think you could take care of yourselves until to-morrow if I go and get your mother?"

"Oh, yes," said Elsie.

"I have a notion to try it," said Mr. Nichols.

"I'll leave to-night and be back by noon to-morrow, and remember, I'll expect to find you both here at the hotel."

"We will be here sure," said Harry.

As Mr. Nichols was leaving he called out jokingly to Harry:

"Be sure and keep out of the tunnel."

"No danger. I'll never go there again," he responded.

After Mr. Nichols was gone, Harry said, "Wasn't it lovely of your father to let us stay. You see that gives us two more days."

When Mr. Nichols returned, he found them waiting at the hotel. After lunch was over and Mrs. Nichols had rested up, they set out to do their shopping. Elsie and Harry went, too, and were greatly interested in the purchases.

"Your mother's getting some beautiful things, isn't she?" said Harry.

"That's just what I was thinking," answered Elsie.

"Never mind, Elsie, you shall have all the lovely things you want."

"Just now, Harry, I'd like to have some candy. But mother never would allow me to eat it on the streets."

"Well, I will," said Harry. "You know you are my wife now, and I'll let you do it whenever you want to."

"You're just a darling, Harry, to be so nice."

"Remember, Elsie, you don't have to ask anyone but me now. I'll say yes every time, too."

"I have always wanted to do so many things, but they never were correct. Now I can do anything."

"Come, Harry," said Mr. Nichols, "I want you to come with me. I am going to look at some machinery."

As Elsie started to follow, Mr. Nichols remarked:

"You had better stay with your mother until we return."

She reluctantly obeyed, her eyes filling with tears at the thought of being separated from Harry. She followed her mother in a listless way from shop to shop, mentally registering a vow that for the future no one would separate her from Harry.

It was late before they reached the hotel. Mr. Nichols and Harry had not yet arrived there. Elsie was frantic.

"Oh, mother," she cried, "what has father done with Harry? It's getting dark."

"Now, Elsie, don't be childish," said Mrs. Nichols. "You know your father has considerable to do. He has not alone to buy the machinery, but has to see that it's packed and

ready to ship. It all takes time, my dear. They will be here for dinner, I am sure."

Mrs. Nichols was right. They came in just as they were sitting down to the table.

Harry squeezed Elsie's hand affectionately as they took their seats.

"Say, Elsie, you ought to have been with us."

"Father wouldn't let me," she said, the tears coming to her eyes.

"Yes," said Harry, "I thought that was mighty small of him. Why, Elsie, there was the biggest lot of machinery I ever saw. Your father bought a pumping plant. You might think that was something to grow, but it isn't, Elsie. It's just an engine with belts and pulleys and safety valves and governors and goodness knows what. It makes so many revolutions a minute, and is, I forget how many horsepower. It's great, I'll tell you."

"Why, Harry, how did you manage to remember it all?"

"You ought to have heard the fellow there reel it off. He's a hummer when it comes to talking up his goods, I'll tell you."

Mr. and Mrs. Nichols put in the evening planning for their journey home, and talking over different things they wished to take with them.

This gave Harry and Elsie a chance to be together again, and Elsie poured out her woes into Harry's willing ears.

"This is just where I'll show my authority," said Harry, with dignity. "I'm your husband now," he said, as he smiled sweetly on her. "I'll give them to understand that I have rights."

"Of course you have, dear," replied Elsie.

"I have the right to stay with you or take you wherever I go. Your father had no right to part us, Elsie."

So Harry laid down his future course of action.

"No one will part us again," he continued; "and they better not try," he said, looking fiercely in the direction of Mr. Nichols.

Elsie smiled approvingly at Harry's determination.

Mr. and Mrs. Nichols finished their shopping, and were ready to leave for the Nelson home.

Harry and Elsie begged for one more day, but Mr. Nichols was obliged to refuse, as it was such a short time now until the steamer sailed and he had his hands full of business yet to be transacted.

"We must leave in the morning, Harry," he said. "I promised your mother I would bring you both back with me, and I must not disappoint her."

"That's right," said Harry, "the mater comes first."

So in the morning they left for home.

Elsie and Harry bubbled over with joy when they met Mrs. Nelson, who was very glad to see them again. Both Mr. and Mrs. Nelson had missed them very much.

"Elsie is just what we want," he said to his wife. "She will keep us from brooding too much over Sybil."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Nelson, "I enjoy her bright way. She is so affectionate and lovable, and will keep Harry here with us. We need have no more fear of his roaming again."

Elsie flitted here and there, helping Mrs. Nelson one minute, and the next adjusting Mr. Nelson's chair or rug, until she seemed to become a necessity to them both. She was just as happy to be with them as they were to have her. This pleased Mr. and Mrs. Nichols. They could see all would be well with her in her new home.

The few days left to them were busy ones. George and his wife had everything in readiness, but Mr. and Mrs. Nichols had many things yet to do, but with willing hands to help them, these were soon accomplished.

Mrs. Nelson wrote to the Lloyds to come and stay over Thursday night with them, as their guests, together with their son and his wife, would leave on the following day for their homes in Ceylon. "Harry says," she added, "to tell Fred and his wife to come, too."

When they received the letter, it wanted two days yet to the appointed time. Fred was anxious to see Harry and hear all about his trip. Mabel, too, wished to see Elsie again.

"I am sorry to see Mr. and Mrs. Nichols leave," said Mrs.

Lloyd; "they are extremely pleasant people, but I suppose they will soon return to see Elsie.

"Mother," said Mabel, "it will be quite nice for you to be able to visit the Nelsons. You must be sure and keep us posted. We are anxious to know if Elsie and Harry will ever settle down."

The visit to the Nelsons was in the nature of a farewell.

The neighbors and friends had come in full force to do honor to the visiting guests.

Elsie showed herself quite a hostess. She saw that everyone spent an enjoyable evening, and left a good impression on the friends, even those who were inclined to regard her as frivolous.

"She really has more character than one would imagine," remarked a stately dame.

While her vis-a-vis raised his monocle and yawned, "Yaas, and her carriage, too, is very graceful."

Elsie flitted about like a happy child among the guests entirely unaware of the comments that were passed on her.

Harry was busy entertaining Fred with his trials during his honeymoon, while Mabel and Mrs. Lloyd were chatting with some old friends. After the guests had departed, the family said good night, as they wished to be up in time to take the early train.

George was first up and had the trunks and grips all ready before breakfast.

During the meal everyone seemed unusually quiet, each one thinking of the farewells that were yet to be spoken before many hours would pass.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd, Fred and Mabel went up to London with them to see them off.

Elsie was heartbroken when her parents kissed her good bye. She clung to them and sobbed piteously until the gong sounded for the last time. Mr. Nelson led her away, still sobbing. Mrs. Nelson and Mabel tried to console her, but it was useless.

"Let her have her cry out," said Mr. Nelson, tenderly. "Poor child; it's hard for her to see her parents go so far away."

She laid her head on his shoulder; he put his arm around

her, and eventually quieted her down. It was not until several days after that they could restore her to her sunny self.

On the way home Fred and Mabel talked about the time when they would have to leave. They dreaded saying good bye worse than anything. Mabel knew how hard it would go with her parents, for they were not like the Nichols, who thought nothing of a sea voyage, and were in the habit of visiting England every year. Mabel knew that all the visiting would have to be done by her, and that would mean a sorrowful parting each time.

"But," said Fred, "we must be leaving soon. All my interests are on the other side of the Atlantic, and I ought to be looking after them."

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd reached home first, having left on an earlier train, while Mabel was trying to soothe Elsie, so that when Fred and Mabel arrived they were waiting with dinner for them. The conversation during the meal turned to Elsie.

"She's a tender-hearted little thing," said Mrs. Lloyd.

"Yes," answered Mr. Lloyd, "you can see now where Mr. Nichols used good judgment in letting her get married to Harry. She never could have stood the separation."

Now that the Nichols, George and his wife had left, Mabel and Fred returned to their plan of seeing more of rural England.

They were absent three weeks, having visited some of the interesting lakes and places made historic by poets and other noted men.

Mabel wrote to her parents telling them they would soon be home, and would only remain a few days, as the steamer they wished to leave on would sail about that time.

"Dear me, how we will miss Mabel," said Mrs. Lloyd.

"Yes," answered her husband. "I have thought it over a great deal. I am glad she has such a good husband. I hope he will bring her back to us often."

When Mabel and Fred returned, they had very little time to themselves. The wedding presents had to be boxed and shipped to New York, their luggage packed and sent off,

a few hurried farewells to friends, and then it was time to be off.

Mrs. Lloyd broke down completely when the last good byes were said. Mabel's quivering lips told how hard she was striving to bear up. Mr. Lloyd gave his nose several vigorous blows, trying to keep back tears, which he considered unmanly.

Fred felt it was hard to take their only child from them, but knew his and Mabel's happiness depended on it.

After the steamer left the dock, Mabel retired to her cabin and gave way to her grief. Fred soothed her as best he could. He ordered the steward to bring her some tea, which she gladly accepted.

"My head aches so, Fred."

"I don't wonder at it, dear," he answered. "Lie down and rest for a while. I think you will feel better."

She did as he requested and soon fell asleep. He quietly left the cabin and went on deck, walking up and down in a restless fashion for some time, and then returned to the cabin and was surprised to find Mabel dressing for dinner.

"It seems good Mabel," he said, "to find you looking like yourself again. I think if you take a turn on the deck before dinner it will refresh you."

She finished her toilet and went with him. The invigorating sea breeze soon restored her spirits, and by dinner time she was herself again.

The voyage was uneventful as it was short.

"It seems to take no time to cross the Atlantic nowadays," Fred remarked to a passenger.

"Yes," he replied; "but wait until they get the aeroplane perfected, then we will be able to breakfast in England one morning and the next morning have it in New York."

"That would be pretty speedy, wouldn't it?" replied Fred.

"Yes, that would be going some," said the passenger.

They landed at noon, and Fred and Mabel drove to the hotel. When they reached it, Fred phoned to Aunt Maud.

"Well, I never! when did you two get here?" she asked.

"About half an hour ago," replied Fred.

"Well, just come up here at once. Charles would feel awfully bad if he knew you were at the hotel, and we living right here in town."

"Mabel wants to say 'Hello' to you."

"Hello, Aunt Maud!" she called, but Aunt Maud had hung up the receiver and gone to call Charles and tell him of their arrival.

They drove immediately to Uncle Charles's, and were met and literally swept into the house by Aunt Maud, who was all excitement over their arrival.

"Why didn't you tell us you were coming?"

"We did not know it, or, to be more truthful, we did not think about it in time. We really hadn't decided on what steamer we would return."

"There were so many farewells and good byes all around we hated to add ours to them, so we made no definite plans until we were ready to leave."

"How did you leave everyone?"

"Just as happy as when you were there, Aunt Maud."

Mabel told her all about Harry and Elsie's wedding, and the departure of the Nichols and Nelson families for their homes in Ceylon, all of which she was very much interested in.

While Mabel and Aunt Maud were talking, Fred wrote a hasty note to Tom, telling him of his return, and then sent a cablegram to the Lloyds, announcing their safe arrival.

When he told Mabel, she said, "Why, Fred, you extravagant fellow. What will father say? I believe it will be the first he ever received. Even Uncle Charles was not guilty of such a thing."

"It will make them happy, Mabel, to know we got here safe."

"I know it will, Fred; but think of the cost."

"What are you two arguing about?" said Uncle Charles.

"I was just calling Fred to order for his extravagance."

"That's nothing, Mabel. Only a trifle. It would be all of two weeks before your father would get a letter, and I

know how happy brother would be to know you are safe with us."

"Yes, that's so," said Mabel. "Now I realize how thoughtful it was of Fred to remember father and mother."

"I suppose they found the parting very hard?" asked Uncle Charles.

"Yes," answered Mabel, "but I am sure it could not be harder than it was on me. I feel a sense of guilt in some way at leaving them alone, but they were happy over my choice. They realize Fred's sterling qualities."

"Charles," said Aunt Maud, during the evening, "we've got to have a reception."

"What for, Maud?"

"Why, for Mabel and Fred."

"Oh, please don't, Aunt Maud," said Mabel, looking quite distressed.

"We must, you foolish girl. You must be introduced into society."

"Bother society," replied Uncle Charles; "they don't care about such things. Fred's got money enough to enjoy life without keeping up any hollow pretense."

"That's right," said Fred; "neither Mabel nor I care a continental for such things. They pat you on the back, and flatter you to the top of your bent, until it becomes nauseating while your purse is full, and trample you under foot when the bottom falls out of it. No society in mine. Give me just a few congenial friends, who would stand by me, when the storms of adversity blow, and not desert me at the first breeze."

"Those are my sentiments exactly," said Uncle Charles.

"Then just because of them, we can't have a reception."

"No; not if no one wants it, Maud."

"Well, then how would a series of dinners do?"

"Now you're talking, Maud. A dinner appeals to everyone. You can gather a few bright friends together, and it will bring out wit and jollity that will surprise you. That's what we all need—something to liven us up. I'd just as soon go to a fight as a reception," said Uncle Charles.

"Charles, I'm surprised at you, talking like that."

"It's so, isn't it? Did you not get a gown nearly torn off you at Mrs. Percival Jones's last reception?"

"There was such a terrible crowd at that we could hardly get through without an accident," answered Maud.

The dinners being decided on as the best mode of introducing Mabel and Fred to their friends, Aunt Maud set about planning her company. After she had made lists for each of her dinners, she submitted them to Uncle Charles for comment.

"Here's a blunder right away, Maud."

"Where?"

"Right here. You've placed General Deepe next to Mrs. Gilmore. That will never do, Maud. You know what a break she made at Mrs. Glitter's dinner, when she was seated next to Broker Dawson."

"What did she do?" called out Fred, who was standing near by.

"Do?" laughed Uncle Charles; "why after he had taken unusual pains to explain the Currency Bill to her, she said, innocently, 'I never could make fruit cake.' 'Fruit cake, madam! Who's talking about fruit cake?' 'Excuse me, General, I wasn't listening, but I thought you said something about currants.'"

Uncle Charles revised the lists and all was smooth again. The dinners proved great successes. Mabel's beauty was the general theme among the ladies, who envied her clear, rosy complexion. The gentlemen found her not only beautiful, but remarkably well informed for one so young.

"She's a great success," said Aunt Maud to Charles on retiring. "She would be a fine drawing card in society."

"Don't ever attempt to drag her into it. She is lovely as she is, and let her keep her innocence as long as possible," said Charles.

"This is a very pleasant way of living," said Fred to Mabel, "but we must be looking for a home. I wonder if we could not find one somewhere up the Hudson. You don't care for city life any more than I do, Mabel, and the scenery on the Hudson is superb. Were you ever there, Mabel?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Maud took me to West Point."

"Let us consult her," said Fred. "She has friends somewhere in that direction."

Later on, when Aunt Maud was at leisure, they broached the subject.

"Why, Fred," she exclaimed, "I know a perfectly delightful place. It's almost a palace, but it would cost a small fortune, I'm afraid."

"Never mind that part of it, nothing is too good for my queen." Mabel smiled at Fred's gallantry.

"Mabel, you are lucky to have such an admirer for a husband," said Aunt Maud. "It's a shame, Fred, that with such a lovely wife you won't go into society. Mabel would have all the men at her feet the first season."

"She would not enjoy that sort of thing," said Fred. "She's going to be a regular home body."

"Well, it's a pity with her pretty face to go and bury herself away in the country, like you intend doing."

"We both find our happiness lies in the same pursuits and intend to enjoy ourselves that way."

Then all went to inspect the prospective home. It was indeed a beautiful place, quite a palace, as Aunt Maud said.

"Fred," remarked Mabel, after they had been shown the house and grounds, "it certainly is beautiful, but what would we want with such an immense place? Look at the buildings around it. It looks to me more like an institution than a home."

"But," said Aunt Maud, "think how you could entertain. It would accommodate fifty house guests easily."

"My dear Aunt Maud," laughed Mabel, "we are not going to run a hotel. We just want a home."

"I'm like Mabel," said Fred, looking at the pile of buildings. "It's too large for us; in fact, it looks more like an institution than a home, just as she says."

They could hear of no other place near there, so returned home.

It took several days of searching, and then they found

their ideal just by accident. Uncle Charles heard of it down town.

"It's just the place you want, Fred; at least it fits the description of the place you are looking for. A young couple with plenty of money built it for a home, but, as the boys say, they 'flew too high,' and now are down to bed rock, and willing to sell at your own price."

They all went to see it, and it was just what they wanted—a large, up-to-date house with beautiful grounds and greenhouses.

"This suits us to a dot," said Fred, enthusiastically.

Before the day was over he was the proud possessor of a home.

Tom and Esther were delighted to hear of Fred's return. They were especially anxious to meet his bride. Tom wrote at once to him, and at Esther's request, invited them to visit them.

Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton also wrote, extending an invitation, and assuring them of a very warm welcome awaiting them from her and Mr. Pemberton.

Fred, on receiving the letter, decided to make the visit before they settled down.

"We can go now," he said, "while we are waiting to get possession of our home."

They found such a welcome as they never looked for from the Pembertons and Tom.

"I've know Fred since he was a child," said Mrs. Pemberton, as she greeted him and Mabel, "and his father before him."

Esther and Mabel soon became friends.

"Come here, Mrs. Fairchild," said Esther, "and I will show you some beautiful views of our country. I am very proud of it," laughed Esther.

"Esther," said Fred, "don't call Mabel by such a formal name. I want her to be just Mabel to you and Tom. She is so young for a matron."

"If she wishes it so, I am more than willing to make a sister of her. I never had one," said Esther.

"Indeed," answered Mabel, fervently, "I would be happy to call you sister."

There their life-long friendship began.

They stayed several days, Tom and Fred never tiring of each other's society.

Mr. Pemberton's health was very poor. He had been ailing for several months now, causing Esther great uneasiness.

Mr. Pemberton was very pleased to meet Fred again. They talked long and earnestly over former times. Mr. Pemberton was still keenly interested in money making, but the old time vim and push seemed lacking. He inquired into the old world's financial standing, but Fred informed him that he really took very little interest in such things during his absence, but detailed to Mr. Pemberton the various places he had visited and special things he had noticed.

"One thing I noticed," said Fred, "was that our stocks and bonds were in active demand among financiers. I suppose I observed that more on account of my holding some, than anything else. I noticed, too, that their market value showed very little fluctuation, so little it was hardly perceptible."

"Fred," remarked Mr. Pemberton, suddenly, "your wife is a remarkably fine looking woman."

"Thank you," answered Fred.

"I suppose you found the happiness you expected in your marriage to her?" he continued.

"Why, certainly," replied Fred, "we grow more and more attached every day."

"Then your expectations have been realized?" he commented.

"Yes, indeed, tenfold," answered Fred, wondering at Mr. Pemberton's conversation.

"You have no regrets then?"

"None whatever," said Fred, still puzzled.

"Nothing to mar your happiness?"

"No, nothing," said Fred. "And I hope I never will," he said fervently.

"I wish your choice had been Esther," sighed Mr. Pemberton.

"Her choice was Tom; mine was Mabel," said Fred.

"Yes, yes, I understand," stammered Mr. Pemberton. "But she would have made you a good wife."

"That I believe," said Fred. "But our hearts had better go with our hands."

"Not necessarily," answered Mr. Pemberton.

"I differ with you there," replied Fred. "I want my wife to give me her whole love, and not, as seems to be getting so general, use my name and money to cover some intrigue with someone else. I have no fear of Mabel. She knows absolutely nothing of the world only what is good and pure, and has not the slightest inclination or desire to see the tawdry side. In fact, I know it would be abhorrent to her. Let me ask you this question, Mr. Pemberton: What possible objection can you have to Esther's marrying Tom? He is a splendid fellow," continued Fred, "upright, honest and industrious. He would make her a good husband. You can't be always here to take care of her. Think how contented you could feel if she had someone to love and protect her, someone that would cherish her and give her the same care you bestow on her, Mr. Pemberton."

The latter did not answer.

"Tom," went on Fred, "is a first rate fellow. He is just like a brother to me. I cannot bear to see his happiness spoiled by your obstinacy. Don't think me impertinent in speaking so plainly. You seem to think considerable of Esther, yet you are taking all the sunshine out of her life by holding the views you do regarding Tom. She has been a wonderfully dutiful daughter to you. Few girls would have been so patient, most of them would have rebelled against such treatment."

"Now let me ask you again," said Fred, earnestly; "what is there in Tom to object to?"

Mr. Pemberton evaded the question by asking Fred if Tom had asked him to intercede for him.

"No, Mr. Pemberton, Tom knows nothing about it. In fact, it only came to me to ask you, while we were talking. My own happiness, as much as anything, brought the idea to me of asking you to give your consent at least to an open engagement."

Before they had time to discuss the subject any further, Esther, Mabel and Tom came into the room, followed by Mrs. Pemberton.

Mr. Pemberton looked sharply at Esther and kept his gaze on her for several seconds.

She walked over to his chair, saying, "Father, do you wish me to do anything?"

"No, Esther," he said, staring vacantly into space.

"Are you not well, father?" she asked, solicitously.

"Not very, Esther," he said, as he drew her toward him and kissed her. As she returned the embrace her eyes filled with tears; and as her mother crossed over to where her father was sitting, Esther took the opportunity to leave the room.

Tom slipped out after her and found her in tears.

"Esther, dear," he pleaded, "tell me what it is that grieves you so? I can't bear to see you suffer."

"It's father, Tom. Do you notice how changed he is getting. He looks so ill," sobbed Esther.

"Yes," said Tom, "I have been afraid some time of a collapse. I don't think that your mother realizes how ill he is."

"I do, Tom, but he refuses to see a physician. Oh, tell me what to do; I can't bear to see father failing like he has lately. We must do something for him, Tom, before it is too late."

After they all retired, Esther laid awake thinking over her father's condition. It worried her. He seemed to be in no pain, yet was gradually growing weaker. She had, only that morning, noticed his halting step—that step that only a few months ago was so brisk and firm. His hands trembled and shook like a man with the palsy. She thought with horror over his mental condition.

"He seems perfectly rational," she thought. "Yet at times his mind seems away off. To-morrow I will talk it over with Tom and see what is best to be done."

But when the morning came he appeared so bright and well that she did not mention it, especially when he told her what a refreshing sleep he had.

"Sleep," thought Esther, "is a great restorer. May be I was unnecessarily alarmed."

Her father feeling so much improved brought Esther's spirits back again. She planned all sorts of gaiety for the guests, theatre parties, dinners, teas and other social functions, until Mabel declared, "I will be terribly spoilt for home life, Fred, if we don't get settled down soon."

"We must leave by the end of the week," said the latter.

Esther objected to this. "Why Mabel and I are just getting acquainted."

"Yes," answered Fred, "but it's time I was attending to my business. I have neglected it too long now."

Tom regretted to see Fred go.

"I wish you had chosen our city for your home, Fred."

"I would probably have done so, if I had not promised Mabel to live near her aunt and uncle. But it's no distance, Tom. As soon as we get into our home I want you to come and stay with us a while. You are surely entitled to a vacation."

"Yes," answered Tom; "I've earned one all right, if keeping close to business counts for anything. Fred, I envy you your home," said Tom, earnestly. "The fates are against me surely."

"I had a talk with Mr. Pemberton about it last night," said Fred. "I tried to find out what his objection was, but could get no satisfaction out of him, and was renewing my efforts when you all came into the room."

"It was very good of you, Fred, to think of our happiness; but it seems useless. I myself have not the heart to bother Mr. Pemberton any more. Esther hopes in time to gain his consent, and you know she will not marry without it."

"Poor Esther," said Fred. "She has been faithful to you, Tom."

"Yes, and I appreciate such love as hers," replied Tom.

"If I was some disreputable cad without a character, I could understand such treatment," said Tom, bitterly. "If he were not Esther's father, I would not hesitate to tell him what I think of him. But after all, it may be the state

of his health. Fred, what do you think of Mr. Pemberton's condition. Esther is very distressed over it," said Tom.

"Yes, and I think she has cause to be," replied Fred. "The morning I came here, I was shocked at the change I found in him. To me he acts like a man who is mentally worried. You don't think he is in any financial straits, do you, Tom?"

"Oh, no, I think not," answered Tom. "My position in the bank keeps me pretty well posted on the financial standing of the prominent men in the city, and I am positive Mr. Pemberton's bonds and other investments are on the soundest kind of footing. His securities are all gilt-edged. He is too shrewd a man to invest in worthless paper or wild-cat schemes."

"I had no authority for thinking so," said Fred; "it was merely a supposition."

"Well," said Tom, "something is radically wrong with Mr. Pemberton; but he will not consult a physician, nor listen to Esther's entreaties to let me do so. Mrs. Pemberton, I am sure, does not realize her husband's condition. She thinks he keeps his mind too occupied on money matters. But my observation," continued Tom, "leads me to believe he is losing interest in such things. He does not get excited over the rise and fall of stocks like he used to a year ago, nor is he so willing to squeeze the dollars out of his helpless victims as he was. I wish, for Esther's sake, something could be done. She relies so much on me, poor girl. She says I am the only one who understands the situation. Her interests are mine, and it grieves me to see her suffer so. She loves her father, and he does her in his own way. She feels something ought to be done to save him from a long illness, which will surely overtake him if he allows his vitality to get too low."

"Well," answered Fred, "I'm very sorry for her and would willingly help her if I knew how."

"That's it," said Tom; "none of us know how. If we broach the subject, it annoys Mr. Pemberton. He is suspicious of our solicitude. So what can we do? Esther

hardly likes to call a physician in opposition to his wishes."

"She is afraid it would do more harm than good. I think an excellent plan would be for her to bring him to visit Mabel and me. We will soon be in our home, and the fresh country air would do him lots of good. He could drive everywhere and remain out in the air. The green fields would be quite a change after the dusty pavements. I will suggest it to Esther."

"What are you two discussing so seriously?" said Mabel. "Esther and I have had such a delightful walk. We had to go alone, as we could not find our escorts."

"That was hard lines on us," answered Tom.

"Well," said Fred, "we have acted like deserters, dropping out of sight so long. You don't know how good it feels to have Tom to talk to, Esther," said Fred. "How are all your protégés doing?"

"Splendid!" she answered, enthusiastically. "You ought to see the transformation of Mrs. Mason, or 'Madame Mason,' as her cards express it. This latter change was made in deference to her lady customers, who insisted in Frenchying her. She bids fair to be wealthy. You would not recognize the dressy Madame as our humble Mrs. Mason."

"And Jamie," asked Fred, "does he continue to prosper?"

"Prosper!" said Esther. "He has moved up town and has a high class book store. After he went to school he was not satisfied with mere newspapers and periodicals. He aspired to fine books and the better class of literature."

"Good for Jamie," laughed Fred.

"And," said Esther, "he was the proudest young man that I ever saw the day he brought the book for you. He drew my attention to the inscription on the fly leaf. 'That's my very best writing, Miss Pemberton.' I could not help admiring his pride. Only a year ago his writing was barely legible, and now look at the fine business hand he writes. I was almost forgetting to tell you the most important change in Jamie. For, bless you, now his upper lip is adorned with a brilliant red moustache. I can't say I

consider it an improvement, but Jamie does, evidently, by the way he continually caresses it."

"Jamie is a good fellow," said Fred. "I was real proud of the book he sent me. I never thought of his remembering my wedding day."

"He came here every few weeks," said Esther, "to find out how you were. He knew always about the time Tom would hear from you. When I told him of your wedding being so near at hand, he asked me to let him know the date, so as he could send his present. One thing I must tell you, was how he resented your choosing an English wife. He wanted you to marry one of our own countrywomen."

"I did not think he really cared that much about me. But I felt I had a good friend in him," said Fred.

"You have, and a staunch one, too, Fred," said Esther.

"Have you added any more to your list, Esther?" asked Fred.

"Only two little orphans. I had them here in the house for a short time. But oh, the storm it raised. Poor father objected to their grammar, and mother found fault with their manners. Neither were perfect, I'll admit. There was abundant room for improvement, but the poor little mites had been so abused that their intellects were not of the brightest, and I could not make them remember my instructions; so I was obliged to send them away to be cared for."

"I haven't done a good deal since I left," said Fred.

"Yes, you have, Fred," answered Mabel.

"When, my dear?"

"Don't you remember the crossing sweeper the cab ran over in London and broke his leg? How you had him attended to at your expense?"

"Yes; I had forgotten that incident."

"How I would have liked to thrash that cabby!" said Fred. "He was so heartless."

"Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, coming to the door, "your father wants you to read to him a while."

She excused herself and left the room.

"Poor Esther," she said, as the latter closed the door; "her father will ruin her health. He keeps wanting her all the time. Every little trifle he wants done it's always, 'Send for Esther.'"

"She seems to enjoy it, Mrs. Pemberton," said Fred.

"I know she does, but it is my duty to attend to his wants, not hers. It's so hard on me, this strain; I really wish he would see a doctor."

"I was going to suggest to Esther that Mr. Pemberton come and visit Mabel and me in our home. The change from the city would quiet his nerves. The green fields would be so restful after the noise and bustle of the city."

"I believe that would do him good," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Well," said Tom, "I hate to pull out, but it's time I was in my rooms."

"We better say good bye, Tom, as we will be off before noon, and won't have a chance to see you again before we leave."

"That's too bad, Fred; I hate to see you go. I believe I'll impose on your good nature, and make that visit."

"That's right; do," said Fred heartily. "We will enjoy having you. Mabel is anxious to play hostess in her own home."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. PEMBERTON.

When Tom came next evening, Mabel and Fred had left for New York. Esther was all alone. Mr. Pemberton was in the library reading, and Mrs. Pemberton was in her room nursing a headache.

"Isn't Fred's wife lovely?" was Esther's comment after they had exchanged greetings.

"Indeed she is," replied Tom. "It's no wonder he was always talking about her attractions. Esther dear, I would be the happiest man alive if I had Fred's privileges. I be-

lieve," continued Tom, "if we ever can get a home, I would like one out of the city, too. I am getting mighty tired of being penned up."

"So am I, Tom, since father has failed in health we never leave home like we used to do. When Mabel described her home, I felt it was just the kind I would like to have. Some times I get desperate, Tom, and then, when I look at poor father, I am ashamed of my selfishness. I don't believe he would let me leave him at all now. He calls for me incessantly."

"Oh, Esther, are we always to be kept apart like this?" said Tom, sadly.

"I suppose so. I would not go against father's wishes now for anything. It might kill him, and then think of the remorse I would suffer."

"I would not ask you to do it, Esther. But when I think of the cheerless rooms I have to call home, an intense longing comes over me for a home that would mean something. I believe everybody has the home instinct in them, and I feel I have been cheated out of mine so far. First I lost my parents so young, and now I am refused the comforts of a wife."

"Let us be patient a little while longer, Tom. I feel all will be well yet," said Esther.

"You have the most hopeful disposition I ever met, Esther. I have about given up."

"Not me?" laughed Esther.

"No, indeed," said Tom. "I'll hold on to you until the end. If there is any giving up, you will have to do it, Esther. It's getting late," said Tom, looking at his watch. "I must be going." He bade her a lingering good night.

As the door closed, Esther thought, "Poor Tom! How patient he is! What makes father treat him so, I wonder?"

She went to say good night to her father before retiring. She entered the library quietly so as not to disturb him. He was sitting with a book in his lap, but gazing into the fire. He looked around when he heard her steps, and motioned to her to sit by him. She drew up a chair. He placed his hand on her head and tenderly smoothed her hair.

"Esther," he said, "I am glad you came. I am far from well, and I want to have a little talk with you."

"Yes, father; I came to get my good night kiss," she said, playfully.

"You are a noble girl, Esther—one in a thousand. What am I that you should love me so? I'm not fit to be loved by you."

"Oh, yes you are, father. You do not feel well; that's all. Fred wants you to come and stay at his country home until you get strong and well."

"God bless Fred!" said Mr. Pemberton, fervently. "I'll never get well, Esther, until I've righted this awful wrong."

"What wrong, father?"

"You ask me such a question, Esther? There is only one wrong to be righted."

"Don't worry about it, father. We all want you to get strong again like you used to be."

"But I cannot, Esther, with this on my mind."

"Could you tell it to me, father, or is it a business matter?"

"You are the only one it concerns—you and Tom."

Esther clutched the side of the chair. Her head throbbed violently. "He is going to ask me to give up Tom," she thought, with fear. "I cannot do it, even for father."

"Yes, you and Tom," he repeated, mechanically.

"Oh, father," she sobbed, "don't ask me to do anything so hard."

"Esther, am I again to be thwarted?"

"I could not do it, father! Don't ask me!"

"Then you don't love Tom?" gasped Mr. Pemberton.

"Love Tom! I have never ceased to love him, and never will," said Esther, with vehemence. "Oh, father, please don't part us."

He turned to answer her; her blanched face met his gaze and before he had time to utter a word she had fainted.

He rose and caught her limp form as she was slipping off the chair, and laid her on the lounge. He called for help, but his feeble voice could not make itself heard.

He walked to the table, took some water from a carafe and sprinkled her face.

"My God!" he ejaculated, "am I like a blight to everything I touch? Esther is the one gift sent me from heaven to cherish, and how have I kept my trust! Her love has grown tenderer with years, while mine has shriveled and decayed. While I was grasping for the goods of this world, I neglected this, the choicest of God's gifts."

As he gazed on her white face, she opened her eyes. He bent forward and gently raised her up, kissing her passionately. "My poor child, what has possessed me to treat you so!"

By this time Esther was sufficiently recovered to realize that something had happened to her.

"Where am I, father?" she asked.

"Here in my arms, dear, where you always rested as a child. Esther, dear, can you forgive a hard, cruel, ambitious father, who would have wrecked your life to satisfy his own ambitions?"

"Father, there is nothing to forgive. Just let me rest here a few minutes with you."

"Esther, put your arms around me in the old way you did before this barrier grew up between us."

She did so. He held her there several minutes.

"Now I will let you go, dear; and in the morning come to me, and I will tell you what I have planned for your happiness."

Esther walked slowly up the stairs, wondering what had come over her father. "I wish it was morning. I want to know what plans father has to make me happy. Could it be possible he would remove all restrictions from Tom and me? It is something good, I know, for father has not loved me like that for years. Dear old father," she thought as she reached her room.

She heard her mother later going down stairs and heard her father's voice as he entered his room. It sounded stronger and more cheerful than usual, but his step still was faltering and slow.

Esther thought and thought; she could only see one solution to her father's promise that he would make her happy. That was Tom. If her father removed his restrictions, then her happiness would be complete. How she longed for the morning to come. How happy she would be when she could tell Tom, and how delighted he would be to hear it. The more she thought over it, the more she was sure that must be her father's intention. She kept revolving in her mind how she would surprise Tom with the news, for she had settled to her own satisfaction that it was this her father meant when he told her he had plans to make her happy. At length she fell asleep with the happy thoughts on her lips.

Mr. Pemberton, though he retired, did not sleep. His mind was continually on Esther. He was alarmed about her condition. She had never fainted before. "Could it be she felt his harshness more than he realized? She never complained," he thought. "But the Pembertons never do, and she is one; she takes after them more than her mother's people. Never mind, she shall be made the happiest girl in the world in the morning. I must make amends for all this. How few men have a child so faithful as Esther."

At last he closed his eyes in sleep. After a few hours he awoke with a start. The perspiration was issuing from every pore and he was trembling violently. He called Mrs. Pemberton. She answered sleepily. He called again. This time she arose.

"Oh, Eva," he cried, "it's terrible!"

"What's terrible, Stanley?"

"My whole life. It's all before me. What will I do?"

"I don't understand what you are talking about," replied Mrs. Pemberton.

"Eva, can't you understand?"

"No, Stanley; I am sure I don't know what's the matter with you."

"Esther. Where's Esther?"

"She's asleep. Do you want her?"

"No, no. She will come. She always does."

"How can she come, Stanley, when she's asleep!"

"Oh, Eva, can't you comprehend anything?"

After a while he dozed off, only to wake up again terror-stricken. He talked incoherently for some time, much to Mrs. Pemberton's dismay. She walked up and down wringing her hands.

Mr. Pemberton called again for Esther.

She offered to go and bring her.

"Bring whom?" he asked.

"Why, Esther. You called for her."

"Did I? I must have been dreaming."

He quieted down and slept for some time, but again woke with a start, sat up in bed and cried, "It's terrible! terrible!" again and again.

Mrs. Pemberton called one of the maids.

"What will we do?" she asked nervously of her.

"I don't know, ma'am. Miss Esther is the only one that knows what to do. We better call her, ma'am."

"No, no," said Mr. Pemberton, rationally, "let her rest; I cannot."

Mrs. Pemberton stood and watched him until he became quiet again. He remained so for over an hour. She dismissed the maid, and laid down herself. She barely got asleep, when he again awoke, raving about his past. He became more and more violent, until he was beyond her control. She rang for the maid, who answered her summons shaking with fear.

"Oh, please ma'am, call Miss Esther."

By this time he was in a state of intense excitement.

Mrs. Pemberton hurried to Esther's room, telling her excitedly of her father's condition. The latter arose sleepily, hardly realizing the purport of her mother's rapid conversation, only that something unusual had happened to disturb the household.

Esther dressed as quickly as possible and made haste to her father's bedside.

She found him raving excitedly over some imaginary shortcoming in his life.

"Poor father," she exclaimed, "he is delirious. Send for a physician at once," she demanded of the thoroughly

frightened maid, who was gazing awe struck at Mr. Pemberton.

"No, no, I am not delirious, Esther. I have had an awful vision of my past."

She soothed him gently, trying to keep him quiet until the arrival of the doctor. But he only grew more and more excited.

"Let me tell you, Esther, of the awfulness of it all. You will understand. Your mother cannot."

Mrs. Pemberton was trembling in every limb. She feared her husband was losing his mind.

"Go," said Esther, to her mother, "leave me alone with father. May be I can calm him."

As Mrs. Pemberton left the room, Mr. Pemberton endeavored to raise himself up in the bed, saying, "Oh, Esther, there is no rest for such as I; none whatever."

"Father, dear, do tell me what is distressing you so."

"It's so terrible, even to think of, I can hardly put it in words, my child. The utter uselessness of my life is all before me. Listen, Esther, I will tell you all I saw, and I see it yet."

"Father, dear, I will listen attentively to all you have to say. But first calm yourself for the effort."

He tried to, but his drawn and haggard features testified to the intense strain he was undergoing. At last, gasping as if for breath, he told her of his vision, if such it could be called. At first he spoke in disconnected sentences, but he went on, with intense fervor:

"The first I knew," he said, "was a sense of rest. I was quietly slipping out of this life and on through space, happy beyond measure. I had been stripped of all care and worry and only knew the joyous content of absolute rest. I floated on and on, until I came to the entrance of Paradise. All was radiant and beautiful within. But just as I gained the entrance, a cold, chilly hand was placed on my shoulder. I looked up and beheld the recording angel, who challenged me, and said:

"What have you done to entitle you to enter here? You have no place in this celestial home. In my kingdom there

is no place for such as you. You have not helped humanity, neither have you uplifted the sorrowful, but heedlessly passed them by. Money was your god. Take your bags of gold and go hence!

"He thrust the gold into my hands, and the weight of it drew me down, down, into an awful abyss. The darkness and gloom were appalling. In groping and clutching for something to stay my awful descent, I dropped my gold. I cared not; for it had not brought me the happiness I had expected. Neither did it comfort me to know that I had lived for it alone. Deeper and deeper I sank into that bottomless pit. My brain seemed as if it would burst from the pain I suffered, as I went down. At last I found myself among the lost spirits, where there were only such as I, who had lived for self. Not a friendly face greeted me, but only distorted and tortured beings, whose moanings and regrets smote my ears, like distant thunder. Even they seemed to shun me, as if I were some pestilent thing abhorred and hated.

"My only thought was for one more chance on this earth to prove that I was not utterly incapable of good deeds. Try as I would, it seemed impossible for me to find an exit out of this abyss. I was doomed to perpetual torture for my past deeds.

"Oh, Esther, can there be no relief for me from this bondage?"

"Father, dear, it was only a dream. You are safe with mother and me, and have yet a chance to redeem the past."

"No, Esther, I have not. I can still feel the icy hand that drove me hence," and he again raved over his wasted life.

Esther tried her best to calm him, but all to no purpose. At length the doctor arrived, and administered an opiate.

"This," he told Esther, "has been coming on a long time. I warned your father some time ago to leave the cares of business and take a long rest."

"Is it his mind?" queried Esther.

"No; his mind is sound enough. This is a severe case of nervous collapse. It may be months before he gains

his strength. He has allowed himself to go too far. I will place a couple of trained nurses in charge, and, with your assistance, your father will soon be on his way to recovery."

Before the day was over the sick-room had taken on a death-like stillness. The nurses moved about their duties silently, while Esther and her mother talked in an undertone. Days went by before any visible improvement was seen in Mr. Pemberton's condition.

Tom came in answer to Esther's summons, and at her request attended to Mr. Pemberton's business, until such time as he himself would be able to resume the care of it. Tom notified Fred and Mabel, and the former came at once to Esther's assistance. She gratefully accepted his proffered services, as he had more spare time than Tom.

Mrs. Pemberton was intensely relieved to find such willing friends, as without them and Esther she would have been helpless in such an emergency.

After several weeks Mr. Pemberton resumed his normal condition, except for extreme feebleness, which the doctor assured them would last for some time yet.

These were arduous days for Esther. She found herself relied on for everything, the care of the household as well as of her father, who would hardly permit her to leave his side.

He seemed to have a dread of anyone else coming near him. The nurses, being familiar with such cases, paid little attention to it, but his friends resented it, especially Tom and Fred, who were present most of the time, giving Esther all the assistance they could.

Gradually they, too, became accustomed to his suspicious glances at their entrance to his room. As his strength returned, he evinced a great desire to again discuss the subject of his dream, but Esther carefully avoided it, until one day he seemed determined to talk about it.

With permission of the doctor, who thought it was best to humor him, Esther allowed him to open the subject.

He still accused himself of worthlessness in the world, but Esther gently reminded him of many things he had done for the good of others.

"Yes, that's true, my child, but you do not know the pressure that was brought to bear upon me before I agreed to do those things."

"But, father, no one could force you against your will, could they?"

"It was not in that way, Esther. There are other ways besides words," he said. "You can be shamed into doing things sometimes; other times it's policy to do a good deed. But it is only the ones that come from the heart that count, I find, Esther. Deeds done for show deserve no reward. Many times, when in my pew at church devoutly kneeling, my mind was off, negotiating a loan, or acquiring some choice bonds or stocks instead of being in touch with my Maker. Esther, will God forgive such as I?"

"Yes, dear father, he is a merciful God, and full of love."

"You really believe he will, Esther?"

"Certainly, father; he has said himself there is more joy over one sinner being brought to repentance than ninety nine just ones."

"Then, Esther, from now on I will serve him faithfully," he said with fervor.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONVALESCING.

Mr. Pemberton was now able to be up again. The old domineering way had left him entirely. He was a changed man. Everyone noticed it. Mrs. Pemberton was greatly worried over this change. She implored Esther again and again not to let her father develop into a religious crank.

"Why, mother, father has no intention of doing anything of the sort. He will be the same good man he always was," said Esther, with spirit. "Just because he sees things from a different view point from what he did, won't hurt us any. We will understand him better for it, and he will understand us the better for it."

"I don't know if we will, Esther," sighed Mrs. Pember-

ton, who hated to see any alteration in him. She had grown used to his being in authority, and was afraid of his present state of mind. He would expect too much from her.

"Oh, dear, Esther," she kept repeating, "I do hope your father won't expect me to feel as he does. I can't, you know, Esther; I never was religious."

"I know that, mother," she answered, "you need have no fear. We will go on, all of us, just as we have been doing. Our lives won't be changed a particle."

"Thank goodness," exclaimed Mrs. Pemberton, greatly relieved to think she could go on the same as usual, and not be subjected to any arguments for or against this new impulse that had taken hold of her husband.

As time went on Esther noticed that her father grew more patient with his wife's shortcomings. Her meagre understanding of things was a great annoyance to him formerly. Now he paid little attention to it, and was more lenient to her little weaknesses.

Esther was pleased to note this, as often she had felt sorry for her mother's hopeless ignorance on commonplace subjects in everyday life.

Mr. Pemberton's strength was coming back by degrees, until he was able to be around again in his usual condition. He grew very tender toward Esther. Her faithfulness in her care of him touched his heart. He now saw his harshness toward her and Tom, and felt thoroughly ashamed of it, especially as the latter had taken hold of his business and cared for it all through Mr. Pemberton's illness as if it had been his own.

Tom now relinquished it, and Mr. Pemberton thanked him warmly for interesting himself in his affairs when he himself was too ill to do it.

"No thanks necessary," responded Tom; "I was glad to be able to do some small service for you in return for your kindness to me."

"Kindness?" said Mr. Pemberton, "I have been anything but kind to you. Did I not, in my selfish greed for gold,

try to break your and Esther's hearts? Your pure, wholesome love seemed folly to me. I measured love, home, everything from the standard of gold, or its equivalent."

"You realize now, Mr. Pemberton, that there are other things of infinite more value than the mere acquiring of wealth."

"Well spoken, my boy," said Mr. Pemberton, "but, Tom, it was brought to me in a terrible way—the erroneous view I was holding of money and its uses."

"Ah, here comes Esther," he said, looking up. "Bless that dear girl," he murmured, affectionately; "what would I do without her?"

"Now, father," she said, as she advanced toward him, "you must not talk too much. Those are the nurse's orders, and here are oceans of mail, and good wishes from everyone." So saying she tossed the letters on the table in front of her father.

Soon he was busy reading congratulations from his friends on his recovery from his severe illness. They all breathed of sincere pleasure at his being able to be up again.

"Ah," he said, as he read them, "then I still have friends who think of me kindly. What happiness there is in that—to know that one is not too far gone to hold the good fellowship of men."

He sat thinking until Esther aroused him with the admonition that he must be careful of his returning strength, and ought to lie down and rest for a while. He did so, and soon was sleeping quietly.

Esther watched him tenderly from day to day to see that he did not overdo himself, and lose the little strength he had gained. Mrs. Pemberton looked on in a listless way. She trusted Esther to manage everything, from the cook to the nurses.

Jamie thoughtfully offered his services in the beginning of the sickness, and made himself useful bringing medicine and other little necessities that the nurses needed.

Esther appreciated these little kindnesses on his part.

"How good everyone is," she thought. "I know this is quite an effort on Jamie's part, as it is so far out of his way. Well we must do something for him some day."

Fred had gone to Aunt Maud's, where he had left Mabel. They were in the midst of their home furnishing when Tom notified them of Mr. Pemberton's illness. Mabel was very distressed over the news when it came to them. She would have gone at once to Esther, but Fred thought so long as the household was so upset it was better not to. He was anxious now to get the home ready so that Mr. Pemberton could come to them as soon as he had strength to stand the trip. Esther, too, needed a rest; the strain of her father's long illness was telling on her. She had lost so much rest, and the anxiety, together with the responsibility, was too much for her young shoulders to carry.

Tom relieved her all he could, but his time was not at his own disposal. He made every effort to cheer and help Esther through the weary days that followed the sickness.

Mr. Pemberton showed his approval by thanking Tom over and over again.

One morning, when Esther was resting and Tom had been granted a day off, he spent it with Mr. Pemberton.

The latter seemed to regard Tom with more favor since his sickness than he had for several years. He inquired into his business and was surprised at Tom's management of his affairs.

"I had no idea your finances were in so prosperous a condition, but, Tom, don't let the greed for gold take hold of you like it did me. I have shaken it off forever," he said, excitedly.

Tom grew nervous for fear this conversation would cause a relapse, and wisely turned it off to some other subject, telling Mr. Pemberton of many funny incidents that came under his daily notice among the various people who came to transact business at the bank.

When Esther returned she found her father laughing as he had not done for years, laughing as Tom had never heard him before.

"Father, you haven't laughed like that since I was a little girl. Don't you remember how you used to hide behind the door and I would look everywhere for you, and when I found you, you and I would laugh so heartily over it. I thought I was having more fun than anyone. And don't you remember, father, how you used to run races with me, too?"

"Yes, Esther, those were the happiest days of all. I could not run a race with you now, Esther, but we can find plenty of things to be happy over yet."

"Indeed we can, father, you and I——"

"And Tom," added her father.

Tom looked up in surprise. Mr. Pemberton had never before included him with Esther.

"Yes," continued Mr. Pemberton, "Tom is going to be in all our plans from now on. Isn't he, Esther?" he said gaily.

Esther could hardly understand this new side of her father; it made her so happy to have Tom recognized at last. They all remained still after this, each one thinking over this new happiness that had come into their lives.

Mr. Pemberton began to doze, so Esther suggested that he lie down. He did so, and after a few minutes was asleep.

Esther and Tom slipped out of the room to talk about the father's conversation.

"Why, Tom," said Esther, "there are tears in your eyes."

"Don't think me weak, Esther, but they are tears of joy. Your father has taken me into his heart, too. You, Esther, always held a place there, but now we are both to share it. Isn't that so, Esther?"

"Yes, Tom. I never told you about a talk father and I had the night he was taken sick. I've never had time to think of it since. My only thought was for his recovery. Now, Tom, let us sit here and I will tell you all."

Esther related the conversation in detail. Tom listened and absorbed every word.

When she finished he folded her in his close embrace.

"Mine at last, Esther," was all he could utter, for now

that Mr. Pemberton had removed all obstacles he, too, felt on the verge of collapse.

Lately he had worried considerably; he had an idea that Mr. Pemberton had formed an aversion to him, but this was entirely without foundation.

Mr. Pemberton had been acting in a peculiar manner, to be sure, but not specially to Tom, although the latter thought so.

Ever since Fred came to visit them, and Tom was a daily witness to his happiness, he felt his own misery more. True, he was always with Esther, but that only made it harder, for he felt Mr. Pemberton would never consent to a closer relationship. Now that Esther had told him the good news, he could hardly bear it.

They remained quiet for some time, then Esther took Tom's hand and said, "Let us go back to father."

They entered the room softly. Mr. Pemberton was still asleep.

"How different father looks," said Esther. "The drawn, painful expression has left his face, leaving a contented look."

They sat there until he awoke, and as he opened his eyes he smiled at them. They helped him into his chair, raised the shades and let in the sunshine, which they had excluded while he was asleep.

"How lovely everything looks, father," said Esther, gazing out of the window. "Did you notice how the trees have leaved out?"

"Yes, my dear," answered Mr. Pemberton, "the whole world looks different to me, even you and Tom have taken on a different expression."

"That is because you have made us so happy."

He reached out and took a hand of each and pressed it warmly.

The nurse gently tapped at the door, and at Esther's cheerful "Come in," entered with her patient's lunch.

"Mrs. Pemberton told me to tell you that lunch was on the table," she said, addressing Esther, who, with Tom,

left the room, while the nurse attended to her patient's wants.

As they entered the dining-room Mrs. Pemberton remarked, "It is easy to see by your faces that your father is better. You both look so pleased."

"We have reason to look so, mother," replied Esther; "father has made us so wonderfully happy."

"How?" asked Mrs. Pemberton.

"By granting our heart's desire."

"Your heart's desire? In what way?" asked Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes, he is going to place no more obstacles in our way. We are free to acknowledge our love for each other."

"Then I suppose you will get married soon," remarked Mrs. Pemberton.

"Not so fast, mother; we must first see father well and able to be around before we can enjoy our happiness. Now that we know it is ours, we can afford to be patient."

"Yes," said Tom; "I don't know when I have felt so good over anything. If I had been cast out of your home, Mrs. Pemberton, I don't know what would have become of me. I seem to have become a fixture in it."

After lunch Tom returned to Mr. Pemberton, while Esther went to attend to some domestic affair that needed attention, Mrs. Pemberton having relinquished her cares to Esther.

"Tom," said Mr. Pemberton, "have you to return to the bank this afternoon?"

"No, Mr. Pemberton; I have been granted a day off. Did you want me to do anything for you?"

"No, not business; but I do want you to take Esther out for a drive. See if we can't get some color into those cheeks of hers."

Tom readily acquiesced. It was just what he wished. He could have her all to himself.

"Go and find her, Tom, and tell her my wishes."

"Poor boy, I've been too hard on him, and he shows it, too, and yet his father was my best friend. What pos-

sessed me to act so I cannot imagine. I have much to be thankful for, in being spared to live my life over."

The nurse, having partaken of her lunch, returned and persuaded Mr. Pemberton to lie down. He did so. She read to him until he fell asleep.

As she sat there watching him, she thought, "What a strangely mated pair Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton are. He with such a strong mind and intellect, and she so weak and vacillating. Strange how such a bright mind, as he must have had in his prime, should choose such a wife. But I suppose it was the old story—he was captivated by a pretty face and nothing more; no character to it. It's fortunate his daughter inherited his rare intelligence, along with her mother's pretty face. She is such a lovable girl.

"Dear me!" she yawned. "What a great place the sick-room is to study character. Human nature has a different meaning to me since I took up the profession of nursing. One sees so many varieties of people and so many strange homes. In the sick-room and on the threshold of the grave people throw off the cloaks they have worn so long, and one is often startled by the revelations they disclose."

Here her reveries were disturbed by her patient awakening.

The first question he asked was, "Did Tom take Esther for a drive?"

On being answered in the affirmative, he said, "Miss Arnold, you have seen many strange cases in your experience in the sick-room. Did you ever find one where the awakening was so hard on the patient as mine was?"

"Well, yes and no, I might say. I have seen people struggle under an imaginary wrong they felt they had inflicted on someone, and I have seen severe cases of remorse. In both instances the mental strain was excessive. But, Mr. Pemberton," she said, firmly, "we must not talk over those things. As near as I could gather from your ravings, you felt you had committed a grievous wrong against your daughter; but now you both are apparently on the best of terms."

"We are, Miss Arnold," he said promptly. "And from now on nothing will ever come between us, as far as I am concerned. I thought, when I was keeping her from Tom, I was doing her a great service. I wanted her to marry money. Why, I don't know. We had more than enough as it was; more than even unbridled extravagance could use. I never realized that life meant nothing to old or young unless it was happily spent. All I thought of was adding to the pile I had already accumulated. Did you ever feel that way, Miss Arnold?" he inquired.

"No, indeed; I've had to earn my living since I was old enough to do so, and never knew what it was to have a dollar that was not already needed the instant it was earned. Many times I have not a cent until I get another case. Yet I cannot say that I am ever really unhappy. I have so many good friends who watch over me and see that I do not want."

"Now you have struck the keynote of real, true happiness," said Mr. Pemberton. "Friends! friends whom we can trust, whether our lives be stormy or calm; ones who will stand by us in adversity as they did in prosperity, and who are always ready to extend a helping hand to us."

"Now, Mr. Pemberton," said the nurse decidedly, "I am not going to allow you to talk any longer. You are in danger yet of exciting yourself, and then all our care would go for nothing. I am going to read to you. Mr. Seymour brought this book this morning. It's something that will make you laugh, he says."

"Bless the boy," said Mr. Pemberton; "what made me use him so?"

"Not another word, Mr. Pemberton. I am going to read."

She did so until she was interrupted by Esther and Tom as they came into the room. She left the room quietly, while Esther entertained her father with all she saw.

"Father, dear," she went on, "so many people stopped us and inquired after you."

"That was very good of them," he answered. "Esther, the drive has done you good. You look better already."

"I must go and find mother," she said; "I have a message for her."

When Tom and Mr. Pemberton were alone the latter took Tom's hand and said:

"Tom, my boy, can you forgive me all the unhappiness I have caused you and Esther?"

"There is nothing to forgive, Mr. Pemberton. I did resent your treatment of me, but now that's all over with; my feelings are the kindest toward you."

"That's right, Tom; don't hold it against me."

"Certainly I will not."

"Come here, Esther," said Mr. Pemberton, as she came back again.

He took her hand and laid it in Tom's, saying, "Take good care of her, Tom. She is yours now."

"I will, Mr. Pemberton," was all Tom could find to say, so grateful was he for the confidence Mr. Pemberton had placed in him.

From this on Tom and Esther were as happy as two children. Tom whistled gaily to and from the bank.

His heart beat fast as he neared Esther's home next evening.

"How good it feels to have a warm welcome awaiting me from the whole family!" he thought, as he ran up the broad steps of the Pemberton mansion. "I have felt for a long time a guest on sufferance in Esther's home."

Mr. Pemberton continued to improve. Fred sent word that they were all ready for him; but the doctor would not permit him to make the journey just yet.

Miss Arnold felt her services were no longer needed, Mr. Pemberton being able to walk to the table and take care of himself to a great extent.

She mentioned it to Esther.

"We will see what father says," said Esther.

But Mr. Pemberton would not listen to her going away.

"I need you, Miss Arnold. You can read to me and act as secretary for a while. Esther needs to be out more in the air, and I need someone to attend to my correspondence. Or is that out of a nurse's jurisdiction?" he laughed.

"I would be glad to do it for you, Mr. Pemberton, while I am waiting for another case, as I have told you, I have nothing only what I earn."

"That settles it then," said Mr. Pemberton cheerfully. "It will help me and be good for Esther."

They were all pleased that Miss Arnold accepted Mr. Pemberton's offer. She was bright and intelligent and needed no instructions. She was capable of handling the correspondence or any other thing that came up in business matters.

This would greatly relieve Esther, who had been doing this in addition to other duties, and now needed a rest.

Esther and Tom were now pleased beyond measure. They built enough air-castles on the future to form a suburban town.

Mrs. Pemberton, too, was relieved to think that nothing was expected of her. She could take up her favorite amusements now. She had been obliged to refuse invitations during Mr. Pemberton's illness, and during that time was at a loss what to do with herself. She was no use in the sick-room and very little out of it. She was free now to go and come. No one would think anything of it, as her husband was able to be about. She had wanted to go before many times, but was afraid people might criticise her. Like most people, she feared public opinion. Miss Arnold made herself extremely useful. She was quick of preception, and Mr. Pemberton found in her an ideal helper at all times.

He told her about his schemes for Esther's future, saying he proposed spending the rest of his life making amends for the past.

She was a good listener, and occasionally made a very apt suggestion, which invariably pleased Mr. Pemberton.

A few mornings after this the doctor made his final call.

"Now, Mr. Pemberton," he said decisively, "what you need is to get out of the city. You asked me some time ago if you might visit your friend. You were hardly able then to travel. Now I say, go, by all means; but take Miss Arnold with you. She will see that you do not tax your strength too much, as you are liable to do."

He gave a few whispered instructions to Miss Arnold and bade his patient good morning.

"When Tom came in the evening Mr. Pemberton told him of the proposed trip.

"I wish I could go with you," he said. "But I can't so that finishes it. Suppose I send Fred word so that he can meet you?"

"That would be a capital idea, Tom. I feel just like a school boy going on a vacation," said Mr. Pemberton.

"You must not act like one," said the nurse. "We must be very careful. The doctor has given me my instructions and I will carry them out to the letter. We must have no relapse."

As soon as Fred received word from Tom he answered promising to be there to meet Mr. Pemberton.

"Mabel wants Esther to be sure and come, too."

"As if Mr. Pemberton would move a foot without her," thought Tom.

This had already been decided on, as Mrs. Pemberton was too nervous to leave home. So Mr. Pemberton, accompanied by Esther and the nurse, left on the morning train.

Mr. Pemberton was in the best of spirits. It was so long since he had taken a vacation that this one was going to give him a great deal of pleasure. As he watched through the train window, commonplace objects and places that ordinarily he would have passed without a second glance, interested him now. This forced holiday was giving him endless enjoyment.

"How is it, Esther, that I never noticed these things before?" he remarked, as they passed old landmarks that had stood for years.

"Because, father, you were always absorbed in business every time you went anywhere. Now you are only thinking of the splendid time you are going to have at Fred's."

"You are right, Esther; never since I was a boy have I looked forward with such pleasant anticipations to a visit. I am anxious to see Fred's home."

"So am I, father. I wish we could live out of town."

"Do you, Esther?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, well, if we are not there already. Look, Esther; here's Fred and his wife."

As soon as Mr. Pemberton was assisted out of the car there was an exchange of greeting. They drove a mile or two before they came to the avenue that led to Fred's home. Everyone was in raptures over the scenery; it certainly was inspiring. The majestic Hudson wound its way placidly on, the sun causing the waters to sparkle with brilliancy, making a beautiful panorama.

When they reached the house and alighted, Mr. Pemberton was taken to his room by the nurse and made to rest after the journey. The nurse watched over him, while Mabel, Esther and Fred made a tour of the house.

"Isn't it lovely," commented Esther numberless times, as they showed her the beautiful rooms.

"Wait until you see the flowers and the greenhouses. Those are the things that Fred and I love. Oh dear, Esther, I'm so happy. I only wish papa and mamma could see the beautiful home Fred has provided for me."

When Mr. Pemberton awoke, Mabel had an appetizing lunch sent to his room. By and bye, he, too, was shown the house and grounds.

"One time a thing like this would bore me, Esther. Now it pleases me."

"I know, father. Now that your eyes are open to the real pleasure of living, you will enjoy such things. Your life before was like a machine; you ate, transacted business, and ate again, day in and day out, and never saw or enjoyed any of the beautiful things that were around you, and that were placed here for yours and everyone else's pleasure. The birds sang around you and the flowers bloomed at your feet, but until yesterday you apparently never saw nor heeded them."

"You're right, Esther; but somehow these things never appealed to me like they do now."

Mr. Pemberton was driven out every day, and at the end of ten days began to show the benefit of the change.

"We must go home," he said to Esther one morning. "This is a beautiful place to visit, but we cannot impose on Fred's hospitality like this."

"No," replied Esther, "we must not. I am enjoying every minute of our visit; but, as you say, father, we must not outwear our welcome."

When they mentioned it to Fred, both he and Mabel felt very much hurt.

"You must not leave here until Mr. Pemberton has entirely recovered."

Esther laughed and said, "It's very good of you to treat us so well; but, really, we must return home. Mother will think we have deserted her."

"Your father and I are going to drive out this morning," said Fred, "and leave you and Mabel at home."

"That's a nice way to treat your guest, isn't it?" said Mabel.

"Never mind," laughed Fred. "We will tell you where we have been when we return. I am going to show your father some of the beautiful homes around here."

Before they left for the drive, Fred wrote to Tom to come and spend Saturday with them.

"Don't tell Esther you are coming. Mabel and I want to surprise her."

Tom was all impatient for Saturday to come. He could get off early and reach Fred's by evening. He kept picturing Esther's astonishment when he would walk in. He had missed her so much. He went to see Mrs. Pemberton and tell her of his going. He urged her to come, too, but she said she did not want to make the journey for so short a time.

"They will soon be home now," she said, meaning Esther and her father.

Saturday came at last, and Tom was on his way to make the visit.

As he came up the steps of Fred's home, Esther re-

marked, "If we were at home, I would say that was Tom's step. It sounds just like it."

A few minutes after this Tom was ushered into the drawing-room, much to Esther's surprise. He was heartily welcomed and was delighted to see the wonderful change in Mr. Pemberton's condition.

The nurse cautioned them against too much excitement, for her patient was doing so well and she wished him to continue so. "To you he is doing apparently so well as not to need such caution, but to a practised eye like mine there is yet great care to be exercised."

They were careful to obey her instructions, so that no bad results followed the happy evening they all spent together.

Tom and Fred rode next day to the various places of interest that the rest had already seen. On coming to an exceedingly attractive home, Fred asked him his opinion of it.

"There's only one word expresses such a place as that: It's perfect!"

"You're right, Tom. It's perfect. Why I asked was that Mr. Pemberton has been thinking seriously of buying it as a home for you and Esther."

"Did he really say that, Fred?" asked Tom, feverishly.

"He did. He told me not to mention it to Esther, but said nothing about you. But if he asks you or offers to show it to you, don't say anything about my telling you, for fear it would spoil his pleasure."

"Do you know, Fred, all this is getting too much for me. I can't realize it's my luck to be treated so good. I would like to marry Esther as soon as possible, but Esther thinks we better wait until her father is entirely well. He relies so much on her."

"He seems to be almost well now," said Fred, "and, Tom, he has great plans laid for your and Esther's future. Mr. Pemberton and I have driven nearly every day together," continued Fred, "and it seems each time he has more to add to what he is going to do for you and Esther."

"I feel ashamed now," said Tom, "of what I used to think of him. I never put it in words, but I felt it all the same."

"Well," laughed Fred, "as long as you did not express it, he never felt it."

"That's true, Fred, but I feel just as guilty over it."

"How do you like our home, Tom?" asked Fred.

"The best compliment I can pay you, is to say I wish I had one like it."

"That's neatly put, Tom. Nothing would add more to our happiness than to have you and Esther so close to us. Mabel has taken quite a fancy to Esther."

"Who wouldn't?" smiled Tom. "She is the best of girls, and her friendship is the kind that never wears out."

"Mabel is a good deal like her, I think," said Fred, "in many ways."

"I think so, too," answered Tom.

When they returned, Tom gave glowing accounts of the ride. "I enjoyed it immensely," he said. "I seldom get much of that kind of exercise." They all discussed the surrounding country. "I just love it," said Mabel, enthusiastically. "It's a different kind of scenery to what I have been accustomed. It's all so grand and on so much larger a scale. Of course, our trees are larger; they have been centuries making that growth, while yours are as yet only in their infancy."

"They look enormous to me," said Esther. "I suppose it is because I have been looking so long at shrubs and bushes."

"How would you like to live here, Esther?"

"I think it would be grand, father. You and mother would enjoy it too."

"I am not talking about your mother, and I am too old to change. All my life has been spent in the city and I believe this quietude would pall on me."

"It's fine for a change," he added as he noticed Fred's interested look, "but one needs to be an ardent admirer of nature to be content in such a place. Isn't that so, Fred?"

"I suppose it is to a certain extent, Mr. Pemberton. Mabel and I both love rustic scenery. And you do, too," he asked, addressing Esther; "don't you?"

"Yes," answered Esther. "This seems lovely to me."

Here dinner was announced. They all repaired to the dining room, where the merriest kind of a time was indulged in during the meal.

When Mr. Pemberton was leaving the table, he asked Tom to come out on the piazza with him. The evening being warm and balmy, when they were seated he talked on different topics, asking Tom about the city and the latest news in business circles. After they had talked some time, Mr. Pemberton turned abruptly to Tom, saying, "Tom, aren't you about tired of business life?"

"Sometimes I feel that way, Mr. Pemberton. The noise, humdrum and incessant bustle and rush tire me awfully, but I hope some day to be able to retire and enjoy a rest."

"Why not do it now, Tom?"

"I hardly think I could," replied Tom. "I want Esther to have a good home. Since I have seen Fred's, I am ambitious to have one like it."

"Tom, I have been thinking over you and Esther ever since I came here," said Mr. Pemberton, "and I have had several ideas in view. How would you like to live near Fred?"

"Very much, if I were able to afford it," replied Tom.

"I never asked you if you could afford it," said Mr. Pemberton, sharply.

"I asked you if you would like it."

"Yes," answered Tom, rather meekly. He was so afraid of getting into disfavor again, he decided to agree to everything he discussed.

"Then let us go and look at a home I have in view. It's just what Esther would like, I know."

"Then let her decide for us," said Tom. "I won't have time to look at anything. I must leave early in the morning, if I expect to be at my desk in time."

"Never mind your desk, Tom," said Mr. Pemberton.

"I must," responded Tom. "They depend on me to transact the day's business, and it might cause a great deal of confusion if I was not on hand."

"When could you go with me to see it?" "Not before next Saturday," said Tom. "That's if Fred invites me to come again."

"Never mind Fred inviting you. That's all right. He expects you to come whenever you can." "Yes, but I don't want to impose on his good nature indefinitely." "You won't need to do that. That is what I propose to do and hope you will concur with my views."

"If it's at all distasteful to you, say so, and I will go no further with the project. If after examining it you and Esther like the place, I have my view. Then I propose to buy it for your home; that is, a supplementary one."

Tom did not quite understand this, but was afraid to differ from Mr. Pemberton. "Supplementary, I said. Tom, do you understand?" "In a measure I do, or guess it." "Well, I don't intend to give Esther up." Tom looked up in astonishment. Mr. Pemberton noticed it.

"I am not going to keep her from you, my boy," he said, "but you must come to us. Our home must be yours. Esther is all I have, and it's easier for me to add a son to the household than it would be to lose my only daughter. This home, if it meets with your approval, will be yours. I will give you the deed to it; but we will all live together in the city or country. How does that strike you, Tom?"

"I would be perfectly satisfied with that arrangement, but I would like to pay for my own home."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mr. Pemberton. "You pay for nothing. Do you think I'll carry my gold a second time with me out of this world and have the weight of it drag me to perdition? No, sir! The next time I go it will be empty handed."

"Mr. Pemberton," said Tom, "I don't know how to thank you for this. I would be perfectly satisfied with Esther alone. I wanted nothing else."

"She won't go penniless to you, Tom. Mark my word," said Mr. Pemberton, warmly.

They talked on for some time, Mr. Pemberton's conversation being entirely on Esther's future. "I don't intend

to allow my money to accumulate any longer. If Esther wants to run any pet charities, she can do so. I'll never interfere with her schemes again. She can start a lunatic asylum, if she wants to," he said.

"She will hardly aspire to that," said Tom, laughing, "although there are plenty of lunatics running around that need to be housed."

"Well, any way, she will find some good use for the money," said Mr. Pemberton.

"Look what she has done for the few she has taken in hand. Show me any slip of a girl of her age that could do so well. Why if I had not stopped her, she would have had orphanages without number, old women's homes, and old men's homes, ragged children's asylums, incurables' homes, and heaven only knows what else by now. Her ambitions ran high in that direction."

Tom laughed at Mr. Pemberton's exaggerations, but he knew of countless things that Esther had done for helpless people, but few ever knew of it. She did not like publicity. She was very generous to the poor and destitute, but did it so quietly that it never reached the public. That was her way of dispensing charity. As she often remarked, "They are just as sensitive as we are and would not like their condition made public."

At this juncture the nurse came out, and gently reminded Mr. Pemberton that he ought to be indoors. He obeyed her reluctantly, entered the house and joined the rest in a social evening.

Tom left them next morning and reached the bank in due time. In the evening he went to visit Mrs. Pemberton and told her of the wonderful improvement he had found in her husband. "You ought to go and see him," urged Tom. "It only takes a few hours."

Tom talked so much about Fred and Mabel's beautiful home that she concluded she would go next day. "But, Tom," she said eagerly, "you must help me. I don't know where to get my ticket."

"All right, Mrs. Pemberton, there's a train leaves at noon, and I will come and see you off."

He hurried to the house in the morning, allowing himself

plenty of time to reach the noon train, but found Mrs. Pemberton had gone. He hastened to the station, but she had not arrived there. After making several inquiries he heard she had taken another train, going in the opposite direction. "Isn't that provoking," thought Tom. "She has taken the wrong train. I wonder why she did not wait until I came." He rushed to the office and phoned to the next station, telling them to stop her, and put her on the return train. Then he took the car and hurried to the bank, excusing himself from duty. He hastily boarded a return car and reached the station in time to see Mrs. Pemberton alight. She looked around, puzzled where to go.

Tom was soon at her side, and guided her safely to the waiting room. "Now, Mrs. Pemberton," he said, "you sit here while I get your ticket. The next train will leave in twenty minutes."

She fidgeted for some minutes, then got up and down several times. But Tom kept his eye on her. He did not want any more trouble; for by now he was feeling sorry he ever coaxed her to go. He had already sent word to Fred to meet her. After he got her ticket, he had hard work to keep her there until train time.

First she wanted a fan. He procured that; and no sooner had they seated themselves than she thought she would like to take a box of chocolates to Esther. They managed to get them without much trouble. Just as the train was almost ready to start, she had Tom run and get her a magazine. He barely had time to get back and help her on when the train pulled out.

He took his handkerchief and wiped his perspiring face, and sat down to get his breath.

"It's no wonder," he thought, "Mr. Pemberton gets out of patience with his wife. I am glad Esther does not take after her mother."

When the train arrived at where she was to alight, she made no attempt to get off until she caught sight of Esther. Then she rose and had just time to get off the now slowly moving train.

"Mother," said Esther, after they had greeted her, "it's

a wonder you did not get killed jumping off a moving train."

"It's Tom's fault. He ought to have come with me."

"Why, how could he, mother? He can't be absent from the bank too long. You never asked how father is."

"I am so excited, Esther. I wish I had stayed home."

"No, you don't, mother," said Esther, soothingly. "You will be all right when we get to Fred's."

She was a long time recovering her composure. Esther renewed her efforts to cheer her up, but it was not until she saw Mabel that she was herself. She knew the latter would sympathise with her. It was new to her, but an old story to the family.

When she entered the house, she rushed up excitedly and kissed her husband. "You look splendid, Stanley," she said, as he drew her towards his side.

"How did you manage to stay away from us so long, Eva?" he asked. "I was just afraid to come alone. I knew something would happen me. It always does. Somehow I can't get along without a guide," put in Mrs. Pemberton, laughing. "Never mind, Eva. You can remain here with us. We will soon be going home now, and we can all go together." "I am so glad, Stanley. Just think, if I had taken a Western train and got out in that wild country, wouldn't it have been terrible!" "It would, Eva," answered her husband.

After Mrs. Pemberton had got over her excitement, she enjoyed visiting with Fred and Mabel. They humored her, and Mabel won her everlasting gratitude by giving a series of card parties in her honor. If Mrs. Pemberton had a special weakness, it was for cards, especially if there were prizes.

She gloried in winning something, no matter how worthless it was, so long as it was a prize. Mr. Pemberton had always allowed her to indulge in the pastime to her heart's content.

She was rather surprised at his continuing to do so. She fully expected him to frown on it now. "Why your father's not a bit like I thought he was going to be. Esther." "What

did you expect of him, mother?" "Well, by the way he was acting when he was sick, I thought I would have to be real serious for the future and take up his views of everything."

"I told you, mother, he would be just the same to us; and I was not mistaken. And, mother, he's just lovely to Tom and me. He is going to buy us a beautiful home near here."

"My! Esther, I don't want to live in this wilderness," she cried in terror. "I just hate the country. It's too slow and dull for me."

"You wouldn't have to live here, mother."

"Yes, I would, Esther. Your father has told me several times he would never give you up, and no matter whom you married, they would have to live with us." "That's his idea still, mother. He prefers the city, too." "Did he say that, Esther?" asked Mrs. Pemberton, eagerly. "Yes, mother. We are to go where we please, provided we make our home with you both. Father intends to have the two homes. This one will be mainly for Tom and me whenever we wish to come here." "I am very glad to hear that, Esther. Tom is just what I need. He was so good to me, getting me a fan—— and, oh! Esther, I had some chocolates for you." "You never gave them to me, mother," said Esther. "Then I must have left them on the train. Isn't that too bad? If Tom had come with me, that never would have happened. Three times he picked up my handkerchief, when I did not know I dropped it. And, Esther, I was on the point of leaving my handsatchel in the waiting room, if he had not noticed it lying on the seat. It was my gold mounted one, too, that your father made me a present of only two weeks before he was taken sick. I never would have found it. It's no use advertising such things. They never bring them back," she commented.

"Well, mother, you surely need a guardian to take care of you. I am thinking seriously of appointing Tom to the office," said Esther, laughing. "Come, mother, let us go back to father."

"Why, Eva," said Mr. Pemberton, as they came into the room, "I thought you had left us."

"Oh, no, Stanley. Esther has been showing me the lovely things Mabel has."

"How would you like to take a drive, Eva? I would like to show you the home I have in view for Esther and Tom. I have an option on it. Tom will be down on Saturday to look at it. I think very favorably of it; and would like you to see it. Come, Eva, say 'Yes,' " "Of course I will, Stanley. I always love to drive. You know that." "We will go in about an hour, then. Miss Arnold thinks I ought to lie down and rest a little. I have walked so much to-day. Do you know, Eva, I am getting so that I enjoy a good walk, since I came here. But they are all so afraid I'll overdo myself that they always make me rest after it." "I think they are right, Stanley." "Maybe so, but I don't care to be treated like a child." "Come, Mr. Pemberton," said the nurse, entering the room. He followed her obediently upstairs to his room.

Mrs. Pemberton rose to follow, but Esther was just coming to look for her and persuaded her to sit down and stay with her. They talked about Tom. It was seldom that Esther could get much comfort out of her mother's conversation, but now Mrs. Pemberton seemed anxious to discuss Esther's future. In the midst of the conversation Mabel and Fred made their appearance. "We have been looking everywhere for you," they said; "where did you hide yourselves so long?"

"I was showing your collection of odd ware to mother for a while. Then we fell to talking here since father went to take his rest."

"Your father is resting then?" said Fred. "Yes, and I don't believe we can keep it up much longer. Father is getting so tired of being ordered around by the nurse, and I really don't think he needs her any longer," said Esther.

"He wants to do as he pleases, but Miss Arnold still keeps him in check. I think we will dispense with her just as soon as we get home. We must see what the doctor says first."

"Mr. Pemberton is going to show your mother that piece of property he has in view. So I had better order the carriage," said Fred, starting off.

"Mabel," said Mrs. Pemberton, "how fortunate you were to get such a good husband." "I think so, too," said Mabel. "You could have such lovely entertainments in this house." "Fred and I don't care much about such things," replied Mabel. "You are foolish," said Mrs. Pemberton. "You might just as well enjoy your lives; you're both young."

"We do enjoy our lives," replied Mabel.

"Not to my notion," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Tastes differ; ours are very simple. We get our greatest happiness in each other's society."

"You're not like me, Mabel. I'd die if I had to trust to Mr. Pemberton's society. He is all business and I never could understand business."

"Never mind, mother, he has given that all up."

"My conscience! Esther. What is he going to do?"

"Just have all the pleasure he can out of his home and family."

"In what way?" asked Mrs. Pemberton, in alarm.

"By making everyone happy, mother."

"Well, the only way he can make me happy is to let me alone," sighed Mrs. Pemberton.

"Ah, here's father, all ready for his drive," said Esther.

"Get your hat on, Eva, and we will start," he said.

The drive was thoroughly enjoyable to Mrs. Pemberton; her husband took no notice of her foolish remarks at his discourse during the drive.

"Eva," he said, before they had gone very far, "I am sorry for the impatient way I have always had with you. I intend to do different in the future. You have been a good wife to me and never did anything to tarnish my name. I know I have not been as good to you as I ought to have been. Your simple way of looking at things annoyed me. I see now that many times I spoke harshly to you when there was no need. You are just as nature made you and I had no right to quarrel with its handiwork. Eva, you and I can be very companionable to each other in our old age."

"Why, Stanley, I'm not old." "No, dear. I know you are not. I never insinuated you were, did I?" said Mr.

Pemberton. "But you will grow old; it's inevitable. It's an issue we can't dodge. It comes to all in spite of everything. We can spend our time, Eva, just as happily when it comes, as come it must. Other pursuits will take the place of the ones we now deem so necessary and a quiet sense of contentment comes to all who have lived as they ought to." "Do you think so, Stanley?" "Yes, I know it. I feel it coming over me daily. I have had that satisfied feeling ever since I have had Esther's forgiveness for the sorrow I had caused her." "What sorrow did you cause her?" "Why, by keeping her and Tom apart. How would you have felt if your father had forbidden us to marry?"

"Oh, Stanley, it would have been terrible," she answered, trembling. "I have not been much of a companion to you, I know, but you have been good to me, and I have always loved you."

"I know it, my dear. From now on you shall be everything to me. I'll not bother you trying to discuss deep subjects with you any more."

"No," she answered, "you will always have Tom and Esther here. They like that sort of thing."

"Poor Eva," he said, as he pressed her hand, "I've been too hard on you in the past."

The tears came to her eyes as he said this.

"Don't cry, my dear," he said, tenderly. "We will begin all over again, and start as we intend to go on." The carriage stopped. "Are we there already?" he asked the coachman. "Yes, sir." He helped his wife to alight, and they walked to the house. The owner invited Mr. Pemberton in; he was getting to be a frequent caller now. He asked permission to show his wife the premises. This was granted. They explored the house and grounds. Mr. Pemberton asked his wife's opinion of it. "It's all very beautiful, Stanley, but I would not want to live here." "It's for Esther and Tom I want it." "Oh," she replied, "I thought you expected me to live here." "Poor Eva," thought Mr. Pemberton, "she will never change. I am the one that must do the changing," he said, resignedly.

They drove back to Fred's and found Miss Arnold looking anxiously for them.

"Father," said Esther, "the nurse has been called by the doctor to attend a severe case of typhoid fever. He has phoned several times during the afternoon, but she would give no definite answer until you came. If you are willing to release her she would like to go at once. There will be a train in twenty minutes."

"Release her?" said Mr. Pemberton, "that's what I have been wanting to do all last week, but she clung to me like a barnacle on a ship's bottom. Tell her to go by all means."

Esther went to Miss Arnold's room, and told her that her father was willing to let her go on the case. She gathered her things together, and a few minutes later came down stairs. Mr. Pemberton handed her a cheque. She looked at it curiously. "There is some mistake here," she said.

"None whatever," answered Mr. Pemberton. "You earned that, and more, too." "Thank you," she said, quietly. The carriage was still waiting at the door. Fred assisted her in, and she was driven rapidly away. Mr. Pemberton laughed heartily as he came into the house. "I'm glad that fellow got the typhoid fever," he said.

"Why, father," said Esther, "what an awful wish." "It gave me a chance, Esther, to get rid of her. Now I can eat what I please, go where I please, and do what I please; isn't that so, Esther?" he said, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Yes, father," she answered. Esther missed Miss Arnold. She had grown accustomed to her attending to her father's wants, and had relied on her to do it, but Mr. Pemberton insisted now on waiting on himself, and being one of the family again.

"How did mother like the house?" asked Esther during the evening. "I got very little satisfaction out of your mother," said Mr. Pemberton. "But she liked it, father; she said so." "That's more than I got out of her. We must be patient with her, Esther," he said. "It's very evident that her ways are not ours." "No," answered Esther, "but mother means well." "Of course she does;

I am finding no fault with her at all. Wait until Tom sees it," continued Mr. Pemberton. "He can't help liking it, father; he told Fred he thought it was perfect." "When did he see it," asked Mr. Pemberton. "Why, Fred showed it to him, and told him all about it. He only saw the house as he drove by." "Well, Tom will be here Saturday, and that will decide it."

"Fred," said Mr. Pemberton, "we must leave your hospitable home on Monday next. I want Tom to make his decision first."

"I can't see why you are in such a hurry to leave us." "I don't think there has been any hurry about it, Fred. We have been here quite a while and made ourselves very much at home at that."

"What else is a home for, if not to entertain our friends?" "It's very good of you, Fred, but we must be off. My wife has an engagement for Tuesday, and we don't dare to let her go alone," said Mr. Pemberton, looking at her. "Stanley, you know I am not that bad, but I cannot travel alone. I never could without something going wrong." "That's it," laughed Mr. Pemberton.

"We need Tom here to take care of you."

"I believe father wants to get back to Miss Arnold," said Esther, jokingly.

"Don't say a word against her," replied Mr. Pemberton. "She is a very capable woman, but one gets tired of a nurse's espionage. I think a great deal of her, and if I were unfortunately to get sick again I would want her to come and attend to me. All that ailed me was that I wanted my way, and she wanted hers. She got what she wanted, and I did not. That was what hurt so."

"You are not used to giving way to any one else's will," said Fred, laughing. "No, and it does not set good on me," answered Mr. Pemberton.

"Esther is the only one he ever would give in to," said Mrs. Pemberton. "Who wouldn't," he said, stroking her hair. "Esther and I understand each other. Don't we?" he asked affectionately. "Indeed we do, father."

Mr. Pemberton enjoyed his freedom. "It seems good,"

he said to Esther, "to be able to go in and out without some one watching you. I believe I would have had a nervous spell if I had to be under a nurse's care much longer." "I know just how you felt, father. Suppose you and I take a walk." "Nothing would please me better, Esther." They strolled on together, Mr. Pemberton, as usual, starting his favorite topic of Esther's future happiness. "Tom will soon be here and we can get things fixed up before we leave; that is, if he is satisfied." "He will be, father. There's no doubt of that. You are so good to us both."

When they returned, Mabel asked eagerly, "Where is Mrs. Pemberton?" "Isn't she here with you?" replied her husband. "No, we haven't seen her for over an hour. She is not in her room, and Fred and I have looked everywhere for her. We knew she did not go with you and were going to take her driving, but we cannot find her." Mr. Pemberton and Esther looked, too; they felt sure she was somewhere on the grounds. But after they had thoroughly searched the house and grounds without success they grew alarmed.

Men were despatched in all directions, but still no clue. Darkness came on, and still no sign of Mrs. Pemberton. Esther was almost hysterical. Mr. Pemberton paced nervously up and down the walk, as messenger after messenger returned without any tidings of his missing wife.

At last, growing tired, he, at Esther's solicitation, returned to the house. The search was continued all night. Esther managed to get her father to lie down. He was so exhausted that he fell asleep. Esther gave way completely now. She had kept up her spirits for her father's sake. Now that the recoil had come, she could control herself no longer. She went out on the piazza and looked in every direction, but could see nothing, not even hear a sound. She went in, slipped up to her father's room. He was still asleep. "Thank heaven!" she ejaculated. "He is unconscious of his trouble while he is asleep," she thought. She ran down stairs again, and out onto the piazza. It was still quiet. She remained there nearly an hour, walking up and down in a restless manner. It was nearing mid-

night and getting quite cold. She entered the house to get a wrap and on coming back saw a lantern swinging to and fro. She watched it feverishly; but as it came no nearer, she ran towards it. "Perhaps it is a signal, and they want help," she thought. When she reached it she found it was one of the men servants. He had found Mrs. Pemberton. She had fallen over a cliff. He found her lying unconscious, he told Esther, but could not bring her up without help. He was swinging his lantern in the hope of drawing someone's attention. "Where is my mother?" Esther asked. "Right near here," he answered. "She has not fallen far." "Take me to her," she said excitedly. She followed him down the steep declivity. By the dim rays of the lantern she could see the outline of her mother's form. Esther was at her side in a few seconds. She threw herself down beside the prostrate form, and covered her with kisses. "Mother dear, speak to me!" she cried piteously. "It's Esther. She bent over and listened for the heart beats. "Get some water!" she demanded of the man. "There's some trickling down there," she said, pointing to a crevice in a rock. "Here," she said, "take this handkerchief and wet it good!" Quickly he did so and she bathed her mother's face with it. Mrs. Pemberton opened her eyes. "Mother dear, it's I, Esther." "Where am I?" she cried nervously. "You have met with an accident, mother; but don't talk. Go and get some help," she said, addressing the man. "Leave me the lantern," she said, as he was going off. He turned back and gave it to her. "Be as fast as you can. We must get my mother out of this cold." She took off her wrap and laid it over her mother, and ran to where the water was, to wet her handkerchief again. The man seemed to be gone an interminable time. It was just breaking into dawn before he returned. Fred and a couple of men were with him. They had a litter, which they carried down to where she was. They lifted her gently onto it, and the men carried her up the cliff. On reaching the top they stopped to rest, Esther and Fred following. The latter gave directions to have her taken to the house.

As they walked off with their burden, Fred turned to Esther. "Why, you have no wrap or covering and it's so cold!" "Yes," she said, "I have been out since midnight." He took off his coat and wrapped it around her. As they neared the house they saw it was lit up, and knew Mabel had returned too.

Mrs. Pemberton was put to bed and the doctor summoned. He said she was suffering from a severe nervous shock. Fortunately, no bones were broken. Mabel insisted on Esther's lying down, and went with her to her room. She ordered some hot tea sent up. "We will take care of your mother; and you take a good rest." She closed the door and went back to Mrs. Pemberton's room. Esther was so tired and exhausted with the strain she had undergone, that she soon dozed off.

Mr. Pemberton was still sleeping. Tom arrived late in the afternoon, and found everything in confusion. Mr. Pemberton awoke soon after his arrival, dressed quickly, came down stairs and was told the whole particulars. He went at once to his wife's room. She looked pale and wan. He was very much worried over her condition. He watched her as she slept fitfully. "Oh, why was I so thoughtless! I ought to have known better than to leave poor Eva alone; and just as I had made so many promises and formed such good resolutions for our future together. This will never happen again," he said resolutely. "I must take better care of her. She is naturally helpless and ought to have someone with her when she goes out."

When Esther came down stairs, she found Tom there. He took her in his arms, saying, "So my poor girl was out all night in the cold, too." "Yes, Tom, I could not rest while we were all so worried about mother. I persuaded father to lie down. I knew, if he did, he would soon fall asleep and he did. I went out to listen if I could hear anyone coming and I saw the lighted lantern that the man was swinging to and fro to draw attention. I ran towards it, and found mother had fallen over the cliff. She did not fall far. The doctor thinks when she fell she fainted

from fright and probably struck some stump in the fall, that rendered her unconscious."

It was several days before she was sufficiently well to tell them how it happened. One afternoon when Mr. Pemberton was sitting by her bedside, he said, "Eva, how did you come to get this fall?" She looked up sadly at him and said: "You and Esther went off and left me alone. I got so tired of being by myself, that I thought I would take a walk around the grounds. The river looked so lovely, and I had heard Mabel say how beautiful it was to look down at it from the cliff. So I thought I would go and see it. I sat quite a while on the edge of it, and when I went to get up my foot slipped, and down I went, Stanley. There was no one there to help me. It was lucky I did not fall far, and fortunate, too, that the man found me when he did. I might have died there, Stanley," "Eva, I will never forgive myself for not taking you with Esther and me. You have always refused us, so I suppose that's how we overlooked you, but I'll promise you, Eva, that I'll never neglect you like that again. Will you pardon me for my thoughtlessness, dear?" "Yes, Stanley, you are not to blame. You have asked me time and time again to accompany you, but I never wanted to go. I don't know why I went, anyway. I just hate walking." "You were lonesome, no doubt," said Mr. Pemberton. "You are not used to country life, Eva."

"That's it, Stanley; it bothers me to be where it is so quiet." "Never mind, just as soon as you are well enough, we will return home. We will all be glad to get back, I think."

Mr. Pemberton remained in constant attendance on his wife until she was able to leave her room. He blamed himself all the time for not looking after her. "Esther, we must take better care of your mother. She is so helpless. She has always depended on me. She is not a self-reliant nature, and we know it, and ought to look out for her better."

"I feel just as guilty as you do, father," replied Esther.

"If we had taken her with us this never would have happened. She invariably refuses us both, when we ask her to go with us, but that's no excuse for our neglect. It must not happen again."

Mr. Pemberton kept at his wife's side as much as he could during the remainder of the visit. Now that she had entirely recovered, he could turn to the prospective home for Esther and Tom, so he arranged with Tom to go with him, and, if satisfactory, close the deal. As Mr. Pemberton started off, he called to Esther: "Be sure and take good care of your mother." "I have her right here with me, father." He waved his hand to them and was off.

Mrs. Pemberton's accident delayed their return home, much to Tom's disappointment. "This is all very well," he said, "for all the rest of you, but it's mighty lonesome for me all the week." "Never mind, Tom," said Esther, "it won't be but a few days till mother can leave."

Mr. Pemberton apologized to Fred for the disturbance the accident caused; the latter laughed at the idea of such a thing. Tom blamed himself severely. "If it had not been for me," he thought, "she never would have come."

He returned, disappointed to think he had to go alone. The doctor assured them Mrs. Pemberton could return in a few days' time, if nothing unforeseen happened. "Esther," said Tom as he said good-bye, "for goodness' sake, watch your mother while I am gone. I am getting lonesome, I see so little of you. Just as I think everything is clear, up there comes some other block to stumble over and delay our happiness."

On account of Mrs. Pemberton's extreme nervous condition, she still needed close attention. This accident marred what otherwise would have been a very enjoyable visit.

Mabel and Fred regretted it very much, and expressed their sorrow about it, but, as Mr. Pemberton said, "these things are unforeseen occurrences." He was thankful it was no worse.

Towards the end of the week, Esther returned home to see that the house was prepared for their reception, she having decided that to be the best plan. Then there would

be nothing to upset her mother's nerves. She would come home and find everything in readiness for her.

Mr. Pemberton was sorry to see Esther go, but they concluded it was best. He could bring his wife in a few days. "It's better for me to take care of her; it's too much of a task for Esther," he thought. "I want her to keep well. She is looking better now than she has for some time. Poor girl, it seems she gets more than her share of trouble."

They all felt lost without Esther, all but Mrs. Pemberton, who was receiving endless mail from her friends, who had heard of the accident (with the usual exaggerations), and who were very solicitous about her recovery. Mrs. Pemberton spent the next few days very quietly. To all appearances her nerves had recovered their usual tone. She was very much relieved to think Esther had gone before them to get the house prepared for their arrival.

"I don't know what we would do without Esther," said Mr. Pemberton. "She seems to be able to do everything." "Yes, Stanley," answered his wife, "she is a wonder. I am so glad she is going to stay with us after she is married. I could not attend to the house like she does." "I suppose Esther and Tom will want to get married soon," said Mr. Pemberton. "Not yet, Stanley; it takes a long time to prepare for a wedding." "It won't take Esther long, once she decides." "Oh, but we must have teas, bridal lunches, and all that kind of thing."

"I don't believe Esther would care a snap of her finger for such things, Eva."

"Well, Stanley, I'm not going to be cheated out of my rights," said Mrs. Pemberton, with spirit. "She is my only child and I want her married properly." "I suppose, Eva, you would not consider her properly married until you run her to death in a social way, and when she is worn out and exhausted by the strain, then you regard her as ready to be married. You will have to consult Esther before you make your plans. She may not be willing to be made a sacrifice of." "Now, Stanley, I've seen the time when you would have spent thousands on her wedding." "And I'll do it yet, if she wishes it. Whatever Esther wants she will

get. I'll not deny her anything that will add to her happiness."

Mabel and Fred had invited some of their friends to spend the last evening that their guests would be with them. This was done to please Mrs. Pemberton, who loved society, and was now well enough to enjoy it. Mr. Pemberton and she expected to leave next afternoon. She was in high spirits. Her's was a nature that always seemed to need something to stimulate it, and society seemed to be the only thing that provided it.

She loved to flit about among the guests in brilliantly lighted homes, where the strains of music, the flowers and gay costumes appeared to intoxicate her. She never looked or felt better than when at some radiant social function.

Many times when Esther would be tired of it, and wish to return home, her mother would be one of the gayest in the assemblage. Yet simple little household cares would prostrate her. She was of a highly excitable, nervous temperament, that needed something of this sort to arouse her. Without it she had not even ordinary ambition. Esther never could understand her mother. Things that would weary her seemed to give added strength to her mother. At length the day came for their departure. Fred and Mabel felt sorry to see them go, but knew Mr. Pemberton was anxious to return home. He thanked Fred and Mabel for their warm hospitality, and hoped soon to see them at their home in the city.

"We feel we owe you something for your kindness to us," said Mr. Pemberton. He wished them both good-bye and got on the train. As the last whistle was blown and the train moved slowly out of the depot, Mabel and Fred turned away.

"We will miss the Pembertons," said Fred. "If it had not been for Mrs. Pemberton's accident, I would want it repeated. We had a glorious time. She is the most helpless woman I ever met. I'll tell you, Mabel, Tom will have his hands full. She is all right at home, but the minute she leaves home the trouble begins. You must get Esther

to describe their trip to Europe with her a few years ago. It's too funny for anything, Mabel."

By this time they had reached the carriage. As Mabel was on the point of entering, she drew back. "Oh, Fred!" she cried in dismay, "Mrs. Pemberton has forgotten her flowers, and I picked all the choicest blossoms I could find in the greenhouse, even your butterfly orchid, and here they are," she said, pointing to a box on the seat. "Really, they were more for Esther. I knew she would appreciate them. I feel so bad, Fred." "Never mind, Mabel; we will take them home and enjoy their fragrance ourselves." "But Esther would have enjoyed them so much," said Mabel, trying hard to conceal her disappointment. "I wish I could have Esther back with me." "Well," replied Fred, "if all signs point right, we will have them near us. Their home is to be put into the contractor's hands for a thorough painting inside and out. The decorators are engaged; so by the time Tom and Esther are married, it will be in readiness."

"I am afraid," said Mabel, "that Mrs. Pemberton will keep them with her most of the time. Esther is the one she relies on. She looks to her for everything, and is planning great things for Tom."

"Tom's got patience enough for the job," laughed Fred. "I am afraid she wouldn't find another to humor her whims and shortcomings like he does. He pays no attention to her silly remarks. Most men they would exasperate." "She is kind hearted, too," said Mabel. "She will do anything for one."

"Of course, she will. She idolizes you, Mabel, you listen so patiently to her woes."

"I can't help being sorry for her, Fred. Esther is just the same to her. She thinks so much of her mother, and puts up with her blundering ways, just as if she were a child."

"Yes, and it's been hard on Esther, too. But now since Mr. Pemberton is so gentle with his wife, it makes it easier for her."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ESTHER'S ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED.

As soon as the Pembertons arrived home and got settled again, Mrs. Pemberton insisted on having Esther's engagement announced. "Why, mother," said Esther, "I don't want it made public. You know what that means." "Of course I do, Esther. It means a continued round of gaiety, congratulations and so forth. You are not going to rob me of my pleasure like that. I suppose, Esther, you would like to go off quietly and get married, and not tell anyone until it was over." "That's just what I would like to do, mother." "Well, it is out of the question, Esther. If I had several daughters it would not be so bad to let one get married like that, but having only you, I must have you married in style. Now, Esther, don't disappoint me. I have always dreamt of a grand wedding for you. I can just close my eyes and see the lines of carriages being driven up to the house; the beautiful costumes, decorations and music, and you, Esther, the centre of it all."

"Well, mother, if it's so absolutely necessary for your happiness, I will consent to an elaborate wedding, but for my part, I'd prefer less show. I'll feel more like a lamb being led to slaughter than a bride, but if you feel your pleasure depends on it, mother, I will agree to it."

"Esther, your father is right; he always is." "How, mother?" He said, "Esther can always rise to the occasion."

Next day the engagement was published in the social columns of the leading papers.

Mrs. Pemberton's cup of happiness was full to overflowing as the congratulations came pouring in. Esther was the guest of honor at innumerable teas, bridal lunches, and everything that her ingenious friends could conjure up.

Mrs. Pemberton insisted upon doing her share of the honors. She had given several smart teas in Esther's honor, and on receiving some choice orchids from Mabel's hothouse, decided she would give an orchid lunch to the brides-

maids. "It will be so 'chic,' Esther. You hear of violet lunches and rose teas, but an orchid lunch will be stunning."

This entertaining went on until at last Esther laughingly informed Tom: "If this goes on much longer, I'll have to break the engagement; it's too strenuous a thing for me. I can't keep up with all they have planned for me." "It's getting tiresome to me, too, Esther. Of course, I don't have to go as much as you, but I had no idea how popular I was until our engagement was announced," laughed Tom. "People seem to think I expect it, but I am sure I would be happier without it. Now I will have to give a farewell dinner. That winds it up, I believe." "Ask mother," said Esther. "She has all the rules at her fingers' tips." "We are two poor, helpless victims of a rapid age, Esther. We are not even consulted on anything."

Mr. Pemberton had said very little on the subject; he knew his wife had planned it all ahead, and was a little uneasy of her for fear Esther would rebel at so much frivolity.

One morning she sat talking over her approaching wedding. "Only three weeks more of it." "Of what, Esther?" "Of this mad whirl, father. It's no wonder so many girls prefer to be bachelor maids these progressive times. It takes a strong constitution to stand it, father," said Esther. "As each day passes I think, well there's one day less. Don't think, father, that I don't appreciate it. I do. But half of it comes from people that think they ought to do it because some one else does it."

"There is one thing, Esther, about it," said Mr. Pemberton, thoughtfully, "it has its good side, too. It has just struck me that way lately. Think of the amount of money it circulates. That's going to do somebody good." "That's true, father. It takes a great deal of money these days to keep in the social swim."

"Why, it surprised me," continued Mr. Pemberton, "when your mother brought me the list of what she called necessities: decorations, flowers, music, caterers, and no end of other people that have a hand in it." "Well, father, if it pleases mother, I'm willing." "I am glad you gave in to

her, Esther; this means to her almost as much as her own wedding did. I know it's very fatiguing to you, but it will soon be over with, and it will give your mother topics for conversation for years to come. Then, Esther, I have a little weakness that way. I always wanted to see you married in state. It isn't every father that has such an attractive and intelligent daughter."

"Oh, father, don't try to flatter me. I'm just so tired of it all." "It's not flattery on my part, Esther. I, at least, am sincere." "I believe you are, father, but people seem to think just because you are wealthy they ought to fawn to me and I don't like it at all, father." "You are oversensitive, that's all." "No, I am not. You don't understand all the ridiculous nothings that are said to me at these teas and luncheons. Everyone seems to think it's their duty to say something to please me; a kind of paying for their luncheon, it looks to me."

"Never mind, Esther. You ought to be used to flattery." "I am, but that does not make it any more acceptable."

Here Mrs. Pemberton came breathlessly into the room.

"I have an idea," she said. "Let us hear it, Eva." "Don't laugh at me, Stanley. I never thought of it before. It's this. Why not have a coaching party?"

"What for, mother?" said Esther.

"Why, for you and Tom, of course; we have had so much for you. Just ladies, and his parties have been given for men. A coaching party would be for ladies and gentlemen together. I think it would be just lovely, Esther."

"Well, I don't, mother," said Esther, with emphasis. "I am just going to put my foot down on it. Tom and I are tired of being on parade. I did in a weak moment consent to a public wedding, but this everlasting dress parade I am tired of." "Why, Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, "I never saw you so cross." "I am not cross, mother. Just tired out. I feel like breaking off the engagement."

"You wouldn't do that, Esther, surely, after everyone knows, and all the invitations are out for the wedding and reception." "No, I won't do it, mother, but I feel like it." "Esther, you gave me quite a shock. I never could face our friends if you should do such a thing. Promise me

you won't." "I will, mother, if you will give up that idea you have." "What idea, Esther?" "Your coaching party." Mrs. Pemberton hesitated a little, but on looking at Esther's determined countenance decided to abandon it. "It's too bad, Esther, how little you care for society."

"It all depends, mother, on what you call society. This hollow mockery that I have been forced to yield to for the last few weeks is yours, but not my idea of society. How long do you suppose they would stand by us if the money they deem so attractive now should be swept away? How many of them we wine and dine now, would offer us one meal? Very few, mother. We have many sincere friends, but it would be easy to count them if trouble came."

"Esther, you are the most extraordinary girl I ever heard of. Who's going to sweep our money away." "No one, I hope. I was just expressing my opinion of our friends in general. They have done it to others when they met reverses, and why would they not do it to us?"

"Oh, Esther, don't let us talk about such horrid things. You don't even want to have a coaching party?"

"No, mother. Let us dispense with any more parties of any kind. I don't even get an evening with Tom any more. We thought we would be alone this evening, but father says you have a theatre party arranged for the bridesmaids, with Tom and me as a side issue. I wish it was all over," said Esther, wearily. "I can't see how you can feel that way, Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton. "I have had more pleasure planning your wedding than I ever dreamed of."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOM VISITS HIS UNCLE AND AUNT.

"Esther, I had a letter to-day from my aunt and uncle, and they want me to visit with them before my wedding."

"They are coming to it, are they not, Tom?"

"Oh, yes; they would not let me get married without their presence. They have seen me through all the important events of my life, and would never desert me at

this, the most important of all. I thought while you were attending to that mysterious arrangement called the 'trousseau,' I would make the visit. I hardly see anything of you any more, Esther. My farewell dinner does not take place for a week yet, so I will be at leisure. I have been granted a month's leave of absence, and more if I wish it. But, Esther, if you are willing, I would rather go for a short bridal trip to our new home, and go abroad later on, as we first planned. This is a very busy season in banking circles, and it would be hard for me to be spared."

"Just as you say, Tom." "Then let us decide on that. I am perfectly willing." "I think we will enjoy investigating our new home much better than globe trotting. We are both too tired to care for it."

Tom left late that evening for his uncle's home, which was some distance off. They had not seen him since his trip to Havana. He was too busy to do much visiting, and his aunt was too feeble to travel far from home.

His welcome was unmistakable. They both were over- and having taken care of him after his parents' death, he was like their own son, and he regarded them in the same way. They had been father and mother to him. All his boyish sorrows and griefs had been soothed by them; all his school triumphs and trophies were rejoiced over with him by them. He had always found sympathetic listeners in them to all his recitals of college work. And when he graduated with such high honors, at the close of the course, they were the first to grasp his hand in congratulation. And now he wanted them to share his happiness in the crowning event of his life; for he felt he was favored beyond expectation in winning Esther's love. Her nobility of character and upright principles had won his uncle and aunt from the start. Although they had seen very little of her, they had heard a great deal about her from various sources.

Tom's letters had always been overflowing with her goodness, and they felt pleased to think he was not deceived in his choice. He was brimming over with happiness over his approaching marriage.

"Aunt Amelia, you will love Esther," he said boyishly. "She is a splendid girl." "I know it, Tom. I liked her face and appearance the first time I saw her. You remember that it was at your graduation. Of course, I had seen her as a child several years before. Your uncle was a little uneasy about your future. He was afraid you would revel in a gay life and forget his training and your father's principles. But I said at the time, 'Tom will be perfectly safe as long as he keeps in Miss Pemberton's society. She will influence him for his own good.' And I was right, Tom, was I not?"

"You were, Aunt Amelia. She has made me what I am. I had no inclination for a wild life; but, if I had not been fortunate enough to secure her friendship, there is no telling what I would have done, alone in a large city. There are so many temptations and pitfalls. And, Aunt, I have seen better men than I fall into them." "That's it, Tom. You might consider yourself proof against them, but the temptations are laid before you in such an alluring manner that young men are led into them before they realize that they have even stepped over the threshold. You have much to be thankful for, Tom, in being privileged to enjoy Esther Pemberton's society. Your father and he were inseparable during their college days. Your father's sad death, I think, changed Mr. Pemberton. He was as high minded a young man as I ever met; but after your father's death he gave himself up to money making. He was inclined that way even in his boyhood; but your father had great influence over him, and made him see there were higher motives than money in this world. But after his death, he forgot everything but the old desire to accumulate money. He worked early and late with that one object in view.

"He married Eva Shaw, a frivolous, shallow girl, whose only thought was dress and society. She was extremely pretty, but had no stability of character. She was no companion for an intelligent man like him, and he did not take long to find it out. A woman of ordinary sense would have been heart broken at his neglect, but her weak nature saw nothing in his unattentive ways. He supplied her with

abundance of money, which she enjoyed spending. She frittered her time away in the society of frivolous and silly women like herself, and paid no heed to her husband.

"The advent of Esther was his great joy. Mr. Pemberton gave all his pent-up love to the helpless babe whom Mrs. Pemberton turned over to the charge of nurses as soon as practicable, leaving her free to enjoy herself in her own untrammelled way. Her husband hoped that their child would open up her dormant nature and create a mother's love in her, in which he could share with his child. But in this he was disappointed, as he had been in every other hope that had sprung into his heart. But he found solace in his child, his spare time being all spent in the nursery, where he romped and played with Esther. As she grew older and he listened to her childish prattle, this was the only visiting place where he could throw care to the winds. Any one that could have seen him at play with Esther would have marvelled at it. The dignified Mr. Pemberton was like a child with her. As the years went by, they grew inseparable. She, fortunately, inherited his wonderful intelligence. For, Tom, I must give him credit for that."

"Yes," answered Tom. "He is as well read a man as it has been my good fortune to meet." "Until he became money mad, he was an indulgent father, but you know how he changed as Esther grew to womanhood. His main idea then was to marry her to more wealth, as if he did not have enough already, enough and to spare. He made poor Esther's life a burden; but there is no need for me to repeat what you already know, Tom." "No," he replied, "but since his terrible sickness, he is a different man, Aunt Amelia. Not only to Esther and me, but to Mrs. Pemberton. He has grown more patient with her. She was, I will admit, an awful trial to him. Where other men had a friend and companion in their wives, he had a simple associate with reasoning powers little above a child's. He felt it keenly. As it was so easily apparent on entering into conversation with her, she was below the average in intelligence and never read or tried to improve her mind."

"Tom, I am going to give you a little advice. I am

getting old and you are just beginning your life. Never keep anything from your wife. Make her your friend always. If things go wrong with you, counsel with her. She will make it easier for you. Let her share your troubles as you do your joys and pleasures. Then, Tom, you will have perfect unity. Give your confidence to Esther. It will never be misplaced. Although I have seen very little of her since your father's death, I know that she has fulfilled all that was prophesied for her. She is unusually bright and intelligent and just the girl to make a man happy. Tom, I congratulate you," she said, and she put her arms around him and kissed him tenderly. "Come, Tom," she said, as she rose and took his arm, "I have a great deal to show you."

As they mounted the stairs, she continued, "I have some paintings of your father and mother that I intend to give you and Esther as soon as you are married. I want to show them to you and explain some things about them, so that you can tell Esther." "I wish you would, Aunt Amelia. It's very good of you to give them to us." "Yes, Tom, they are for you both; and in giving them up, I am parting with my dearest treasures. It's not without a pang, but they will be dear to you, too, the only link you have got to connect you with your parents, Tom. I have treasured them for years, knowing that some day I would have to give them up. But it makes it easier, to know that to Esther they will be as sacred as they have been to your uncle and me." He pressed his aunt's hand to express his gratitude; words could not do it. He could not utter them, if they would.

"Aunt Amelia, won't you please tell me about my father and mother? You told me many years ago the sad story of their short married life; but I was too young then to understand the awfulness of it. Now I want to hear it again, if you can bear to talk about it. I remember, years ago when you were telling me of it, how the tears would roll down your cheeks and you would choke so you could not speak."

"Tom, time has softened my grief; but the memory of

it remains with me still. That I expect to carry with me to the grave; but, while I am here to tell it to you, I will.

"Your father and mother married young and were happy as birds. Nothing ever came to mar their lives. Remember that, Tom. They died in their happiness. Your father had an intense love for the sea. When he was a child, he would run down to the beach near his home and play for hours with the sand and shells. The sea birds grew to know him, and would walk in the sands around him, and never take flight at his approach. As he grew older, the waves seemed to fascinate him. He would watch them come in, and listen to the soft music as they rolled back into the ocean, leaving the shells and bubbles behind. As they returned, he would shout joyously and run backwards, challenging them to reach him. As the years went on he longed for a boat. This wish his father granted; and every spare moment was spent on the sea he loved so well. When he came to manhood his love for the sea had grown in proportion with his years. One day while strolling on the beach he became tired and sat down to watch the waves. A little way off was some one sitting under an umbrella. He could not see whether it was a man, woman or a child, and paid little attention to it. The waves came closer and closer. He began to read, and so absorbed was he in his book that he failed to hear the cry for help until an old woman called aloud to him that her young charge was drowning and begged his assistance. He got up immediately and rushed to the water's edge just as a wave was carrying out its burden a second time. He ran, grasped it, drew it towards him, and then looked for the first time and found it was a young girl. He carried her up to the dry sand and laid her there. The old woman wrung her hands and upbraided herself for her carelessness. 'She is unconscious, whether from fainting or the shock, I do not know,' said your father. 'Run up to that house,' he said, pointing to one on the hill, 'and see if you can get some help.' She did so and the owner returned with her, bringing some brandy, which they managed to get down her throat. She opened her eyes, and your father gazed for

the first time into the eyes of his future wife, your mother, and my sister. She was a beautiful, fragile girl of seventeen years. We all idolized her. She was the pet of the household and had just recovered from a severe sickness, and had gone down to the beach in charge of one of the maids. She had fallen asleep on the sand and the maid must have dozed too, for when she felt the water rush over her feet, she jumped up and saw her charge being carried out to sea, as she thought, and raised the alarm. She was carried home, and next day when your father called to make inquiries after her health, he found her sitting on the veranda, apparently as well as if nothing had happened. Thus began the friendship that ripened into love.

"Your mother had the same love for the sea that your father had. They spent all their spare moments at the water's edge, the stormier the day the more anxious they were to be on the beach and watch the battling waves, and see the raging waters in all their moods and tenses. The following summer they became engaged and were married shortly after.

"As one of their wedding gifts, her father gave them a beautiful yacht. He could not have given them a gift they would appreciate more. They sailed everywhere in it, and were happiest when on the ocean they both loved. The following year you were born; your mother gave up yachting. Her whole time was spent with you. Your father, too, devoted his time to you. They both worshipped you, and had neither use nor inclination for anything else.

"The yacht laid out at anchor for months in the sailors' care, apparently forgotten. You were their idol now. When you were six months old your father persuaded your mother to take a sail with him. She demurred at first, but on looking out at the ocean decided to go. Before she started she lifted you out of the nurse's arms, kissed you passionately, saying, 'It's the first time I have left my darling.' As she left the room, she stopped and stood at the door, went back and kissed you again, then went out into the sunlight, humming gaily as she went.

"Your father took her arm; they ran down to the beach

like two little children, I and the nurse laughing at their frolicsome ways as they skipped along. That was the last time we ever saw them in life. Ten days later their bodies were washed ashore.

"After the yacht had got well under way, they sat in the stern, each with their hats off, enjoying the fresh breeze. A vessel under full sail was coming towards them. They turned; it turned also at the same time. Crash! went the bowsprit into the yacht and hurled them into eternity. They must have been stunned, for they sank immediately.

"Your father was a good swimmer, and could have saved his own as his wife's life, if he had a chance. When the news came to us, we were overcome with grief. The first to recover was your uncle. He lifted you out of your crib and pressed you to his heart. 'My poor baby, Tom! You are mine now, you will never feel the pressure of another mother's kiss, but in our hearts you will take the place of the child we have been denied so long.'

"He wept softly for several hours by the side of your crib. I was as if someone struck me a terrible blow, partly conscious of what was going on, yet unable to weep or speak.

"Your mother was like a fragile flower. We guarded her with all the care we would give a tender plant. The blow crushed us completely.

"Her parents lived only a short time after. They never recovered from the shock; and I was left to mourn and suffer alone, the only one of the family remaining. If it had not been for the care of you, which occupied my mind, and the loving kindness of your uncle, I don't believe I would have tried to arouse myself, so poignant was my grief.

"The water-washed bodies were privately buried in the old churchyard. Some day I will take you there, Tom," she said, but he heard nothing, so intense was his grief.

His aunt slipped quietly out of the room, his grief being too sacred for intrusion. It was not until dinner time that she met Tom again. The traces of his tears were still

visible. During the meal he recovered some of his composure, but not until next day was he able to speak without betraying his sorrow.

His aunt deferred showing him the paintings of his parents until the day before his departure. She planned all sorts of amusements to make him forget the tragedy of his parents' death.

He had heard it all before when he was many years younger, but it seemed more awful to him now as he was approaching his own wedding.

He shuddered when he thought of it. He could picture their upturned faces as they were tossed by the sea they loved so much onto the sands where they had walked for hours together.

"It's strange I never had any great longing for the sea, when my father and mother both loved it so well. I will always hate the sound of it now. It will have a mournful cadence to me, as if it were mourning over the victims it had swallowed up, not one victim, but whole shiploads. It seems to be an unsatisfied monster, always ready to devour more and more prey."

One day when Tom was driving with his uncle they happened to pass the cemetery. His aunt had judiciously avoided it for fear Tom would ask questions. "Is this where my parents are buried?" asked Tom. "Yes," nodded his uncle quietly. "I want to go in and look at their graves," he said. His uncle tried to dissuade him, but to no purpose. He stopped the carriage at Tom's request.

Tom entered the cemetery, his uncle following. He asked him to direct him to the graves. "Follow me, Tom," was all he said. He walked far back into the cemetery, followed by Tom. He stopped at a marble shaft. Tom read the inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of George and Constance Seymour, who were drowned Oct. ———." He got no further. He staggered and leaned against the iron railing for support. His uncle led him away against his will. "Not now, Tom. Some other time when you can bear it **better**."

They entered the carriage and were driven home. His aunt noticed at once that something was wrong and questioned her husband.

"Oh, why did you go anywhere near the cemetery?" she said. "I avoided it on purpose; I knew the poor boy could not stand it. The shock of hearing it all again has been too much for him." "You told me, my dear," said her husband, "that you were going to show him his parents' graves." "I did; but when I saw how bad the recital of their sad deaths was affecting him, I thought it was better not." "I wish you had warned me. I would not have hurt Tom's feelings for anything. Poor boy," he continued, sadly, "I hope Esther will make up for all the pleasure he has been denied in the loss of his parents. We have done everything we could for his comfort and advancement, and lavished all our love on him, but his own mother would have filled the place better than either of us. There is an undefined something in every child that only a mother's wonderful love can reach."

Later on Tom approached his aunt, who was attending to some flowers in the garden, and asked her if some time during the day she would not show him the paintings of his parents. "Are you sure you can stand it, Tom?" she asked. "All this has been hard on you. You came here so happy, and we were happy, too, in having you with us again. Why I allowed you to resurrect the past and cause you all this sorrow, I know not."

"Aunt Amelia, don't blame yourself. I wanted to hear it again; why, I do not know, but now it seems inexpressibly sad to think of my poor girl mother and loving father meeting with such untimely deaths. It has unmanned me. Why such sorrow was visited on me, when other parents who were unworthy of even the name lived! Why could I not have felt the pressure of those pure lips on mine now, when I would be able to realize the wealth of the love they expressed!" "Such things are unexplainable," said his aunt. "There is a wise Providence who rules our lives and knows what is best for us, better than we do, and we must bow to His will in all things."

Tom remained silent, too deep in thought to answer. "Where's Tom?" called his uncle. "Here I am," said Tom, rousing himself. "Come and see my new horse. You used to be very fond of a good horse as a boy. Do you remember that pony I gave you on your tenth birthday?" "Indeed, I do," answered Tom. "I never was so proud of anything in my life, and I remember, too, how bad I felt when I got too big to ride it."

They went to the stable to see the horse, which was a fine trotter. Tom and his uncle spent quite a time admiring it and visiting the kennels, for his uncle was a great admirer of dogs, too. Tom's spirits began to revive now.

"How would you like a spin behind Fleetwing? He goes like the wind." "Nothing would please me better," replied Tom. The hostler harnessed the horse, and soon they were trotting towards the park. Tom really enjoyed it, and by the time he returned, all traces of his trouble had disappeared.

They were very careful not to allude to it again. "I would not send him back to Esther in such a mood," said his aunt. But Tom seemed now to have banished the horrible scene from his mind, and joined in the merriment with the family again. This relieved his uncle greatly, who was so attached to Tom that he suffered too when he saw how hard it went with Tom to hear the sad story of his childish bereavement.

Tom received a letter from Esther next day telling how things were progressing.

"I am still the hub; everything revolves around me. Poor mother never was so happy in her life; she has found an excuse for another lunch. She just discovered we had not chosen a matron of honor. Of course, no one was just right but Mabel. So there had to be a lunch to introduce her to the bridesmaids, many of whom Mabel had not met. Mother is overjoyed because Mabel accepted. She feels, too, she has added another star to the firmament. They are all raving over Mabel's beauty. She is English, you know, and mother's set—I hate to use the vulgarity, Tom, but that's all that expresses such snobs—are gushing over her,

much to mother's delight. It puts another spoke in her wheel of success.

"How I envy Mabel and Fred their freedom from the social tyrant called fashion. We must humor mother. Maybe some day she will tire of it all. Let us hope so. And now, my gay cavalier, when are you going to return to your Esther? It's only a short time till mother's ambition will be fulfilled. I just dread the ordeal and wish it was over."

Tom read on to the end. As he folded the letter he thought, "Why anyone wants such a display I can't imagine. Esther and I are the principals in this drama. Yet we have not the right to dictate one scene in it. I must be getting back. I have yet to figure at a farewell dinner to my bachelor days."

"How is Esther?" asked his aunt, as he laid the letter down on the table. "Just as well as a modern bride-to-be can expect to be. She is worn out with continued social duties and longing for it to be over with. I must remain with you, Aunt Amelia, only one more day."

"Promise me, Tom, you will bring Esther to see me." "I will. She expressed the same desire about you." "I would like to see more of her," said his aunt. "I have seen very little of her in late years, and now that she is to become almost a daughter to me, I am anxious to see her again."

That evening Tom's aunt asked him to come and see the old paintings she wished him to have. She conducted him to an unused room, fitted the key into the door and unlocked it. She turned the light on; he gazed at them in awe. "How is it, Aunt Amelia, that I never saw these pictures before?" "Because, Tom, the sight of them was so painful to your uncle and me that we had them removed here, out of sight. When I heard from you of your approaching wedding, I came here, uncovered them, and dusted them myself. I could not bear any other hand to touch them. I have kept them all these years, knowing the time would come when they would be precious in your eyes, and would adorn your home, as they once did mine."

"They shall be placed in the sunlight in my home," said

Tom. "I want their faces to look on Esther and me and witness our happiness. I feel the influence of my mother's sweet face will guide our lives, and father's manly countenance will urge me on to a nobler and better life."

"Now, Tom, let me tell you a little about them. This," she said, pointing to a full length portrait of a child of ten years, "is your mother as a child." Her brown curls hung over her shoulders and her large blue eyes looked straight at him. "How lovely she was!" he exclaimed, "even as a child." "Yes," responded his aunt, "but, Tom, that picture shows no animation. Her face was perfect when wreathed in smiles."

"This," she said, pointing to the painting of a young man, "is your father, just as he left college. How proud your grandfather was of him that day. You have his physique. Look at his broad shoulders, just like yours. You have the same poise of the head. It was well for you, Tom, that you inherited your father's fine constitution. Your mother was more fragile."

"This," she said, showing him the painting of a handsome young girl in a shimmering white dress, "was your mother as a bride; and this," she continued, turning to a portrait by its side, "was your father, taken the day before his wedding."

"Oh, Aunt Amelia, why could they not have been spared to gladden my life," he said, sadly. "Tom," said his aunt, as she saw the tears gathering in his eyes, "come away. Let us go and find your uncle. These paintings I intend to give you and Esther for your home," she said, as she turned off the light and prepared to lock the door again. There are other things here that I wish you to have, Tom, but not during my lifetime. I want to keep them with me as long as I live." "God grant that you may retain them many years yet," replied Tom, fervently.

The rest of the evening was spent with his aunt and uncle. They told him many pleasant incidents in connection with his father's and mother's lives. "You and Esther must keep in touch with us," they said. "You are all we have to brighten our old age." Tom told them of the

beautiful home Mr. Pemberton had given them, and how it was now in the decorators' hands. "You don't know how happy we feel to know you are allying yourself to a good family. So many young men choose some showy, vain girl, who could not possibly make a life companion worth calling such and find it out too late. Matrimony is a long road to travel, and a young couple should be very careful in choosing their partner," said his uncle, seriously.

"I have made no mistake, I am sure, uncle," said Tom, "in selecting Esther. She has been tried so much during our engagement and has borne up well under it all. She had innumerable chances to marry wealth, but refused them all. She loves me, I know, just as dearly as I do her."

"Yes," replied his uncle, "the Pembertons are good people. I have known them many years."

As Tom bade them good-night, his aunt drew him towards her and kissed him gently. "You must not mind me, Tom," she said. "To me you are yet only a boy." "I want you to feel that way towards me, Aunt Amelia. I was starved for some affection after I left you to go out into the world of business until I met Esther." "We missed you, too, Tom, but there was no opening here for a young man of your qualities. We felt it was better you should go to a large city. We knew Mr. Pemberton could advance you better than we could. He knew more of business methods." "Yes, he has given me some good advice on business matters. Still my independent nature would assert itself at times."

"To-morrow I must leave you, Aunt Amelia. Esther is getting impatient to see me, and I don't blame her. I feel the same way. We seem to have become necessary to each other's existence."

"That is as it should be, Tom," replied his aunt. "Well, I will say good-night again," he said, as he took her hand in his and pressed it warmly. Then he went to find his uncle, whom he found asleep in his chair. He stood and looked at him a few moments, saying, "Dear old uncle! You were father and brother to me, and are so yet!" He turned and went quietly to his room. When he reached it, he

turned on the light and read Esther's letter over again, and sat thinking of her until he found himself nodding. He hurriedly disrobed and laid down sleepily, still thinking of Esther.

He rose early next morning so as to have all the time he could with his uncle and aunt. After breakfast he left for the train, promising to have some one to meet them and conduct them to the Pemberton home when they came for his wedding. "Do, Tom," said his uncle. "We are as bad as two children when we go to a large city; always afraid we will get lost," he said, laughing. "I will take care of that," said Tom, "and get you there safely."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING.

When Esther heard Tom run up the steps of her home, she was at the door ready to greet him. "I have been watching for you, Tom, ever since I knew the train was due." "I got here as quick as I could," said Tom, breathlessly. After they entered the house and sat down, Tom said, "How is the trousseau progressing?" "Ask mother," replied Esther. "I don't count for anything. You would think it was her, not I, that was getting married; but she is enjoying it, so why should I care? You must not mind, Tom, if she goes to putting you through your paces. She is so afraid you will stumble over my train." "How long is it going to be, Esther?" "I don't know. I let mother settle that. I only expect to wear it once. Father says she cried her eyes out because the dressmaker would not allow her to have a train two yards long on her wedding gown. I don't want any tears shed over mine," laughed Esther. "Tom, there are two more additions to the retinue already engaged." "More bridesmaids?" queried Tom. "No; two pages, if you please, in white satin and wearing cocked hats. They are to hold the train. "And keep me off it, I suppose," replied Tom. "Esther, you and I had grit to

undertake it." "We did not know what we were going into, Tom," she answered. "However, it will soon be all over; and, as father says, mother will have something to talk about the balance of her days."

They sat a long time talking over Tom's visit, and over what Esther had done in his absence. "I suppose, Esther," he said, "you have no end of beautiful gowns." "Oh, yes, Tom. You know, father gave mother his permission to spend all the money she wished to on me, and she is striving hard to live up to his instructions. The only thing she will not forgive me for is my insisting on having everything bought in my own native land. So the whole trousseau will be made of home products, much to mother's disgust, who thinks that unless a gown comes from Paris it's not *au fait*. I have agreed to everything else, but on that one point I held my own. Our stores have just as lovely things on this side of the water. It's all nonsense to send to Paris for our clothing. We have just as capable men and women, too, to make them. Only we call them Mr. and Mrs. instead of Monsieur and Madame." "Still, we have plenty of people, too," said Tom, "who think, just as soon as you Frenchify the name, the goods and the maker are much better." "Yes, look at Mrs. Mason. She was an nonentity until she became Madame Mason. Now she is chic and quite the rage. It's laughable, isn't it, Tom?" "It would be, if it did not have its serious side, Esther. The question arises, Where are we drifting to? Are our own people getting ashamed of their country and products? Our wealthy class live abroad all they can, as soon as they have accumulated the means. Their own country becomes too plebeian. We have no titles to acquire, nor court ways to ape. Are we becoming," continued Tom, "too snobbish to admit our superiority, or are we going into premature decay? Let us hope not, Esther. Do you know, I think that too much money is worse than none, Esther," said Tom. "It leads first to extravagance, then to folly and on to imbecility. At the third generation we find our young men minus the qualities that made their grandfathers famous. The sturdy honor they guarded with pride has van-

ished. The courteous treatment of womenkind in general has followed it. The industry and frugality that brought out their best qualities has been submerged, leaving in its place a generation of weak saplings. It lies now with the future mothers to raise the standard to its old place, and there are plenty of good women left that are capable of doing it." "Well, Tom," said Esther, "it's a big jump from degenerates to dress, but I'll have to make it, for here is Madame la Mode coming up the steps."

After they were admitted, the Madame and her assistant walked up stairs. Esther did not follow them immediately, as she knew by experience it would take some time before she would be ready. Madame la Mode had all the hauteur of her profession, and demanded absolute obedience to her orders before she would consent to even discuss a gown. Most of her customers were as putty in her hands; she moulded them to suit herself. In Esther she found her match, she would have her gowns made to suit her or not at all. The Madame was too diplomatic to dispute with her. The patronage of the Pembertons meant too much to her. It was a favorite expression with her that she was modiste to the Pembertons.

This had the effect of awing her less fortunate customers. When they objected to a certain style, all she had to say was, "Miss Pemberton admires it." This was sufficient, no matter how unbecoming it was. It was perfect if Miss Pemberton thought so. Esther, of course, knew nothing of this; but had decided long ago that she would not submit to the Madame's arrogance.

The maid came at length and told her that Madame la Mode was at her service. Esther walked slowly up stairs, dreading the ordeal. On entering the room, she found her mother revelling in laces and all kinds of dainty finery. "Esther," she said, excitedly, "the Madame has some of the loveliest chiffons I ever saw, and such a beautiful collection of filmy gauzes. I am just dying to see them, but she would not open them until you came. She says the bride should see them first."

The Madame, after greeting Esther, put on her eye-

glasses very deliberately, then bowing stiffly in the direction of the assistant, ordered her to untie the numerous boxes they had brought with them. Mrs. Pemberton was all excitement. She could hardly restrain herself, so anxious was she to see the contents of the pasteboard boxes. As soon as they were opened and the goods displayed on a table provided for the purpose, she invited Esther to choose. Esther looked over them carefully and picked out what she thought was necessary. Her mother could not understand her coolness. "Are you sure you have decided on enough gloves and handkerchiefs?" she asked concernedly of Esther. "Yes, mother; I have." "You ought to have more of those lovely collars. One can't have too many, Esther," she continued; "and veils, too, and belts. The Madame has taken the trouble to bring these things for your inspection." "Yes, mother, and I have admired them and chosen what I need."

Mrs. Pemberton could not resist the temptation of adding endless costly trifles to what Esther had already chosen. Every now and then she would see something else she needed, and the Madame watched her shrewdly as she sorted out ribbons and laces enough for a dozen brides. At last the choice was completed and laid aside. The Madame gave a haughty glance at the assistant, notifying her at the same time to fold up the remaining goods and put them into their boxes.

Mrs. Pemberton ordered refreshments sent up. As Madame partook of them, she informed Esther that she would call next day and try on the bridal gown, which had reached that stage of importance. She drew on her gloves, and nodding graciously to Mrs. Pemberton and Esther, was conducted down stairs.

She took her seat in the waiting carriage, and drove to her establishment, well pleased with the prospect of the large cheque that was before her. "A most delightful girl to provide for," said the Madame to the assistant. She never worked for any one; she provided their gowns. That was the usual way she put it. "So many of these wealthy people haggle over the price of things, but Miss Pemberton

never does. She will make a beautiful bride, Marie. I will need your assistance at the fitting on to-morrow. I have not decided yet on the style of train, whether to leave it square or round off the corners. What would you suggest?" "Square, Madame. It's easier for the pages to hold. "You're right, Marie. One has to consider those things. Ah, me," said Madame, reminiscently, "how many brides I have dressed and how few have been really happy." The carriage stopped at the establishment and the Madame walked languidly in, followed by the assistant, who was loaded down with boxes.

Madame la Mode arrived next morning according to promise. She had with her two assistants, for Madame never deigned to stoop to the preliminary fitting. She only added the necessary touches for completion. When she was all ready, she sent for Esther and requested her to mount the block, as she laughingly told Tom. Madame commanded her assistants to put the gown on Esther, and, after several critical glances, told them what changes to make, and where to place the lace. When they had finished, she walked around Esther in a stately manner. Then ordered her assistants to hold the pincushions while she made some needed alteration. She put a pin in here and there, then surveyed it critically again, made some more changes, stood off and reviewed her handiwork, until Esther was almost ready to faint from fatigue.

"Will it take much longer, Madame?" pleaded Esther. "Just a little more time, Miss Pemberton. I want your mother's opinion of it."

She called Mrs. Pemberton, who was in the next room, and had, at the Madame's request, withdrawn during the trying on period. "I don't wish you to see it," she had said, "until it is ready to view," as Mrs. Pemberton had begged to be a witness to that important operation.

Now that the permission was granted, Mrs. Pemberton rushed into the room, throwing up her hands in ecstasy, exclaiming, "Esther, you look perfectly lovely. Every eye will be on you as you sweep down the aisle." "It would be so, any way, mother," she answered; "no matter what I

looked like. It's disgusting to think of the way people of supposed refinement stare at a person at weddings and receptions."

Mrs. Pemberton was too intent on admiring the bridal robe to hear anything. She was down on her knees examining the beautiful lace flounce which adorned the bottom of the dress.

"Where did you get that handsome lace flounce?" she exclaimed. "It came from Paris, Mrs. Pemberton." "Did you hear that, Esther?" said her mother. "You declared you would not have an article in your trousseau that was not woven or made in this country." "I would not, mother, if I had known it." "You could not help yourself, Esther. We cannot manufacture such lace."

"I would have had my dress embroidered then. "The duty on that lace was enormous," put in Madame. "That's one consolation, people have to pay duty on imported goods."

"You are very patriotic, are you not, Miss Pemberton?" said Madame. "I seldom meet customers who are content with purchasing what they need on this side of the water. 'It must come from Paris,' that is their edict; if it does not, they refuse to accept it."

"You must not mind my daughter, Madame la Mode. She has some very peculiar ideas about her country. If she had not, I might have been mother-in-law to a duke." Madame opened her eyes in astonishment, as Mrs. Pemberton recited Esther's peremptory refusal. "She certainly must be a strange girl," commented Madame. Esther listened to her mother's account of his Grace's ancestral possessions, which she was entertaining the Madame with, in disgust.

"I may appear strange to you, Madame, but I love my country. It's my birthplace, and why should I not?" said Esther, warmly. "I am not ashamed of it like so many of my countrywomen are."

Madame readjusted her glasses and looked calmly at Esther's flushed face. "My dear Miss Pemberton, you must not excite yourself." "I am not at all excited, Madame.

Just tired, that's all. It always annoys me to hear people apologizing for the imaginary shortcomings of our country. We have accomplished more in one hundred years of our life than any other nation."

"That will do, Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, irritably. "As Madame says, you must not excite yourself. I am sure I don't want my daughter to be a red faced bride."

"Miss Pemberton will make a handsome bride," said Madame, trying to smooth the troubled waters.

"May I rest now, Madame?" said Esther, who was aching all over from standing so long. "Certainly, Miss Pemberton. Remove the gown," she said to one of the assistants. "Just let me have another look at it before you take it off," said Mrs. Pemberton.

As she gazed on it, she said, "It's simply superb, Madame. You certainly are an artist in your own line." Madame bowed graciously at the compliment. When Esther was relieved of the burden, as she called it, she threw herself on the lounge. "Will it need any more fitting?" she asked. "No, Miss Pemberton," answered the Madame. "We can finish it up now." "Oh! I'm so glad," said Esther, thankfully.

Mrs. Pemberton ordered lunch sent up, for Madame was tired, too, after the ordeal. She supervised the folding of the bridal robe, and sent it back to the dressmaking parlors by the assistants. That and the fitting had so wearied her that she was obliged to rest before leaving the Pemberton mansion. While doing so, she entertained Mrs. Pemberton and Esther with the history of former brides she had dressed. They were all beautiful girls according to her description; but, as Esther remarked afterwards, "All rich girls are beautiful. You never read a newspaper report of one that wasn't. It must be the reflection of the dollars that glorifies them."

There was nothing talked of now by Mrs. Pemberton but the coming wedding. She would open up all the beautiful accessories that were prepared for the bride, and admire them like a child would a toy. Then she would fold them up, only to open them again next day. As Esther

often said, "Mother could not be happier if it was her own wedding she was preparing for."

She had even persuaded her husband to view them, but thought him very unappreciative, because he did not want to look them over next day with her again.

"That's just like a man, Stanley; they have no estimate of the sentiment that goes with such things. I can't see them often enough for my part," she said. "But then, I just dote on pretty trifles."

When Esther was rested up, she went in quest of her father. She found him in the library reading the paper. He looked up and smiled as she entered. "Where does my girl hide herself these times?" he asked. She answered him by telling him of the ordeal she had passed through. "But that's the last of the trying on. I never had the slightest idea that getting married was such hard work. Did you, father?" "To tell you the truth, Esther, I never gave it much thought. My idea was, girls bought a few extra gowns, decorated the church, paid the minister his fee for his services and presto! it was all over. But it seems I was mistaken. The whole house has been in a turmoil for over a month. We can't even sit to the table any more together. It's a lunch or a tea, or something all the time. Farewells to every one but father," laughed Mr. Pemberton. "They can't hardly wish him a tearful good-bye, as he is needed too bad to furnish the funds for the rest of the farewells." "It is funny, isn't it, father, when you analyze it?"

"I am glad of one thing, Esther; that is that I made you promise to remain with us. The more I think over it, the more I realize that our home would be desolate without you. I would be companionless but for your society; and Tom, too, has become a necessity to me. He is just like a son. I want you to tell him when he comes this evening that I wish to see him, Esther."

"He won't be here this evening, father. You know he has to attend the dinner."

"I'd forgotten that, Esther. Well then, when he does come, tell him."

"I will, father," she answered, "but he will be here to lunch to-morrow and you can see him then."

"That's right, Esther; that will be time enough."

"I can rest now, father; everything is almost ready."

"Your mother won't let you rest, Esther. She will find some new social duty for you to perform."

"No, father; she told me only this morning that it was customary for the bride to have the last few days to herself."

"Thank heaven for the custom," said Mr. Pemberton. "There's your mother calling you now. I knew she would not let you rest."

As Esther rose to leave the room, she kissed her father affectionately.

"Tom's lucky to get her," he commented, as he took up his paper and began to peruse it.

"Esther," said her mother, "did you decide on the style of slippers you would wear with your bridal gown?"

"Of course, I did, mother. Why?"

"Oh, I am so sorry, Esther. I have just heard where I could get lovely ones, white satin embroidered with seed pearls."

"Now, mother, don't bother me any more, please. I don't want another thing. I just want to rest up and should think you would, too."

"Why, Esther, this is a tonic to me. I have been up stairs five times since the Madame left, looking over some ornaments she left here for you to choose from."

"What are they for, mother?"

"To fasten your bridal veil with."

"I am not going to wear any ornaments but father's and Tom's."

"Not those pearls, Esther?" said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes; those pearls."

"Esther, you provoke me. You might just as well wear your diamonds; they sparkle so beautifully in the electric light."

"Is that all you wanted me for, mother?"

"All I can now think of, Esther."

"I am going to my room now, mother, and don't, please, disturb me. I wish to rest until dinner time."

As soon as Esther had closed the door of her room, Mrs. Pemberton went to the library to see her husband.

"Well, Eva," he said, "how are things progressing?"

"Just lovely, Stanley; only I can't persuade Esther to buy another thing."

"Probably she has all she wants," he replied. "You better leave the poor girl alone; she's worn out."

"What has she done to wear her out?" asked Mrs. Pemberton.

"It's not what she has done, but what the balance of you are doing. Madame la Mode kept her standing until she was weak from exhaustion."

"Well, I must say, Stanley, you and Esther are the strangest pair I ever heard of. Here am I, all enthusiasm and neither of you appear to care a snap. Esther won't even look at the ornaments Madame brought. She says she is going to wear the jewels you and Tom gave her."

"I am glad to hear that, Eva."

"You are! Well, it's extraordinary. Diamonds are just the thing for evening wear. That's when they show off best," said Mrs. Pemberton, resignedly.

They sat talking about Esther and her wedding until dinner was announced.

Esther came to the table looking bright and refreshed. Next morning her father took her driving to the park. Mrs. Pemberton refused to go; there was too much attraction at home.

When they returned, Tom was there with her. He told them of the dinner, and all the fine things they had served to them, and how many toasts were drunk to his health, and of the good wishes of his friends for their future happiness.

"You drank your toasts in water, I suppose," said Esther.

"Yes; I don't propose to break my promise to uncle, just on the eve of my wedding. I made that promise to

him just as I was leaving for college. I wondered at the time why he exacted it; but I soon found out. He understood the conditions better than I did. The college boys used to laugh at me for trying to keep such a promise. Of course, there were times when I found it awkward to live up to; but I can't say now I lost anything by it. It took lots of courage at first to stand the taunts of the fellows, but after a while they never annoyed me."

"Keep it up, Tom," said Mr. Pemberton. "It won't hurt you; and I know it will help you constitutionally, if in no other way."

After lunch Mr. Pemberton requested Tom to come with him to the library. After they were comfortably seated, Mr. Pemberton turned to Tom, saying, "I want to have a talk with you. There is a great deal I would like to say and I will be as brief as possible. To begin with, I need you here with me, Tom. Would you mind retiring from the bank to take charge of my affairs? I will give you double what you are getting at the bank."

Mr. Pemberton noticed Tom's surprised look, but went on. "I cannot handle my business any longer alone. My property needs an active man to look after it. In looking over my papers, I find several of the insurance policies have run out. I trusted my agent, but find he neglected them. Several other business matters have come under my notice, showing his careless way of handling them. This cannot go on, Tom. I had every faith in him, but now find it was misplaced. I have said nothing about my discoveries to him yet, nor do I intend to until I investigate further. I will need your assistance, Tom, in any case. I know I can rely on you to help me."

"Indeed you can, Mr. Pemberton. If you like, I will help you now; I have nothing special to do."

Mr. Pemberton was pleased with Tom's willingness. He went to the safe and brought out his papers, handing them to Tom for closer examination.

"You never answered my question yet, Tom. Will you undertake the control of my affairs? I am getting old. Esther is all I have, and naturally she will inherit every-

thing. She will need some one accustomed to business to help her in the management of her property; and you, Tom, are the proper person to do it. I wish you to become familiar with it all, while I am here to instruct you. Will you grant this wish of mine?"

"I will, Mr. Pemberton, on one condition; that is, if I can send in my resignation to the bank. I cannot occupy both positions, and do either one of them justice."

"Thank you, Tom; I feel as if I can consider it settled. It will relieve me of a great burden. I have one more request to make of you, Tom," he said pathetically, "which I hope you will grant. I never had a son of my own to call me father. Esther has been a good daughter to me. Could you bestow a favor on me and call me father?"

Tom grasped his hand. "You have been a father to me and will always remain so. God bless you, father," said Tom, fervently.

"Thank you, Tom. You have made me very happy."

It seemed strange to Tom to call any one father. He had never used the word before in addressing any one, and felt embarrassed at the sound of it. Esther just came into the room at that moment and wondered why they were both so silent. Mr. Pemberton was the first to speak. "Esther," he said, "I have a son. Tom has promised to call me father and be my son in reality."

The rest of the afternoon was spent in a happy reunion, Mr. Pemberton having put the papers back in the safe at Esther's approach.

Mrs. Pemberton gushed over Tom and insisted on him calling her mother, too, which he did, much to Esther's amusement.

"Tom, you don't know what you are undertaking in adopting mother. She will be running to you for everything, and entertaining all her friends with the wonderful doings of her son, Tom. You know what mothers are. There are no children as smart as theirs."

"Well," laughed Tom, "I'll be appreciated at last."

Tom found time next morning to make a visit to the

bank, and conferred with the manager, who was very much upset by Tom's request.

"Could you not see your way clear, Mr. Seymour, to conduct both positions?"

"No," said Tom; "I could not do it properly; they both need close attention and one or the other would have to suffer neglect in consequence."

"Well, Mr. Seymour, since you desire it, I will call a meeting of the directors, and after they talk it over I will notify you of their decision. But I do wish you would reconsider your resignation."

Tom assured him that it would be impossible, as Mr. Pemberton needed him badly.

That being attended to, Tom walked to his club and began to arrange his affairs there. He had consulted with Esther about giving up his membership, but she advised him not to.

"You will want to keep in touch with your friends, Tom, and will perhaps enjoy an evening with them occasionally. You would hardly expect me to give up my girl friends because I got married. No, Tom, let us both feel at liberty to enjoy our pursuits without interference from one another. I don't believe either of us will ever care to be away from home much."

"I know I won't," said Tom.

"And where you are, there's where I will be," said Esther.

On mentioning the fact to her father, he said, "You have shown very good judgment, just because a few words pronounce you man and wife, that does not give either of you any reason to curtail the rights of the other; nor does it give either of you the authority to dictate the other's life. You have both just as much right to your own opinions after you are married as you had before. But love tempers our regard for one another and gives us the right and wish to respect the other's feelings. It's too much like a relic of barbarism, where one puts the iron heel of despotism down on the other because they don't coincide with their

views. Thorough harmony only comes with thorough confidence; never keep anything from one another. Let your lives be an open book, where each can turn the pages of memory and review the past together. Both your lives are unsullied and there is no reason why you should not reach the highest pinnacle of happiness. I predict a long, happy life for both of you."

"Thank you, father," said Esther. "You have made me very happy. Mother said I was foolish not to make Tom leave his club before I married him, just to show my authority over him."

Mr. Pemberton laughed heartily. "Your mother is very heroic when it comes to words, but perfectly harmless in the practise of them."

Tom resumed the examination of the papers next day and found many signs of carelessness, but no actual delinquency. At Mr. Pemberton's suggestion, they went and examined several pieces of property they had heard from the tenants were in bad condition. This took up nearly the whole day. Tom went to the club to see if there was any message from the bank. He was handed a letter which had come shortly before.

The directors had decided to ask him once more to retain his position before they took any definite action on it. He read the letter to Mr. Pemberton, who advised him to please himself.

"If you want to deliberate on it, do so, Tom."

"No," answered Tom. "My mind is made up. I think I can be of more service to you. I will send my answer in the morning."

"Let us get back to the house," said Mr. Pemberton. "We will just have time to reach there for dinner."

Tom demurred, but Mr. Pemberton insisted on his return.

"I promised Esther I'd bring you back again. Now, Tom, I propose we leave the rest of the business until you return from your bridal trip."

"Did you attend to those policies?" asked Tom.

"No; I did not."

"We might as well stop there now," said Tom. "There's

no telling what might happen over night and the loss would be great."

They drove to the office and found the clerk preparing to close. "Just in time," said Mr. Pemberton, as he stated his business. It took the clerk but a short time to renew the policies. They then turned homeward, reaching there barely in time for dinner.

"Well, Esther," said Tom, as he sat down to dinner, "has mother added any more to the collection?"

"I don't know. I've had Maggie here all the afternoon. I had to show her everything. You know, she is a favored individual with us. She lived here so long and was my nurse until I was too big to have one. You ought to have been here to hear the praises she sang for me. I don't know whether you will accept her method of showing your gratitude or not. She said, 'Indeed, the fine gentleman should always be on his knees, giving thanks for getting so blessed a girl for a wife.'"

Tom laughed heartily.

"Well, I might, if the girl was not all the time sitting on my knees."

Esther blushed at Tom's audacity.

"Maggie's all right," he said.

"We think so," answered Esther. "She is wonderfully interested in our wedding. I promised her some wedding cake. Don't you forget that, mother."

"Esther, my hands will be full enough without bothering about Maggie."

"I'll get it to her somehow, then, if I have to send it by special delivery, mother."

CHAPTER XXIX.

EXCITEMENT IN FINNIGAN'S LANE.

Mrs. Mulligan arrived back in Finnigan's Lane bristling with importance. The neighbors knew where she had been and were just as anxious as she was to hear the news. As

soon as she was safely inside her house, Mrs. Israel was invited in. She was soon followed by Mrs. Burgomeister, and her next door neighbor. Mrs. Israel and Mrs. Burgomeister felt rather important. They had met Miss Pemberton, the millionaire's daughter. This rather awed the other visitors. But Mrs. Mulligan was equal to the occasion. She took off her bonnet and wiped her perspiring hands and face and put on her apron with a deliberation that was exasperating to the waiting guests. Her neighbors waited breathelssly to hear the news. At last they could stand the suspense no longer; and Mrs. Brady, an extremely stout or, as she called herself, fleshy woman, said abruptly, "Yez has been to the big house on the Avenoo, they do be telling me."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Mulligan, who felt a notch or two above the rest of the neighborhood, being the only one in the lane that had lived in a fine family, as she often told them about it. Mrs. Burgomeister had worked in the bakery, and Mrs. Israel in a factory, and the other had lived out, as they expressed it, but not like Mrs. Mulligan, among the fine folks.

"I suppose there do be great doin's up there," continued Mrs. Brady.

"Indeed, there do," answered Mrs. Mulligan. "Sure yez niver seen the likes, such butiful dresses, shoes, hats; the likes of which none of yez ever seen. I even seen the joowels she do be goin' to wear."

She went on enumerating the various articles of apparel, enlarging on their beauty and price. At last the neighbors, with the exception of Mrs. Israel and Mrs. Burgomeister, took their departure. It was then that Mrs. Mulligan told the most important part of the news.

"Sure I have more to tell yez, but not to the likes of them," she said, pointing a fat thumb in the direction of the parting guests. "That Brady woman is too inquisitive for anything. She niver crosses the street to bid me the time o' day; and now she is that impudent she do be coming here to find out the news. Now I'll be telling yez two. Sure, Miss Esther has a stack of clothes as big as this house

for me. And it's yourselves that will be having some. There's a red hat there, that's a beauty. Miss Esther wore it just onct to a garden party. I was thinking it would be nice for Aggie to get married in, but her father do be that queer, he wouldn't let her wear it, I know. He hates red. He says it's the divil's own color. He niver seen a pictur' of him but what he was all dressed in red."

"That don't matter, Mrs. Mulligan. "There's lots of fine people wear red. Your husband don't know what he talks about," said Mrs. Burgomeister, who was very partial to red.

"Let me tell you more; there's hats enough for all of us, and dresses such as the likes of yez has niver seen. The bed was stacked high with them. And stockings," she whispered, as she heard Jamie's step, not thinking it proper to mention such things in her son's hearing. His coming into the room closed the conversation. As Mrs. Mulligan saw her visitors off, she put her hand up to her mouth, and whispered, "Come agen tomorri and I'll tell yez more."

"Well, ma!" asked Jamie, "how's Miss Pemberton?"

"Just as good as iver. She do be that kind to us all. She has iverything stacked up so high," she said, as she raised her arm above her head to indicate the height. "There's clothes enough for all of us and one or two of me friends besides."

"I have got a splendid present for her, ma; it's an edition de luxe, pictures of the old masters, a gift such as a lady of Miss Pemberton's education would appreciate and enjoy."

"I don't see how she could, Jamie. What does she care about your old masters? There was Terence Maguire; he had the smallpox, and it's a mighty poor pictur he'd make. And Mr. Ryan, so fat and pompous; and Mr. Flynn himself was no beauty. Yez might have chosen better, Jamie."

"Why, ma, you don't understand. They are painters."

"Painters!" she said with contempt. "You better go and get a fotygraft of that wan that's painting Burgomeister's bakery. He's not very good looking, I know, but he's as good looking as any painter I know of."

"Ma, let me explain. It's copies of paintings that artists have painted in Europe of Bible and coronation scenes and things like that; rare works of art. They occupy prominent places in churches and cathedrals—the originals do."

This appeased her some, but she was disappointed in Jamie's taste. At this point Aggie made her appearance. She always came home at noon.

"Oh, ma," she said, "the girls are all crazy about Miss Pemberton's wedding. It's going to be awful grand, they say. They just tormented me to find out the particulars. I told them you were going up there, and you bet they look up to me now," she said, as she vigorously chewed a piece of gum.

"Yes," said her mother, "they do be butiful things up there at the big house," and she rehearsed it all for Aggie's benefit. "I was forgetting to tell ye all about the fine clothes she do be after givin' me for the children."

When she came to tell about the red hat, Aggie was in raptures over it.

"It don't matter if pa don't like red. It's chic," she said. Aggie worked in a millinery store, and had picked up many catch phrases.

"What's that?" asked her mother.

"It's stylish and odd. Makes people open their eyes, turn round and look at you," said Aggie.

"I should think it would," said Jamie, who had come in time to hear the last of the conversation. "A red hat with your red hair?"

"You don't need to talk, Jamie Mulligan. Your hair is redder 'an carrots."

"That do be no way to talk to each other," said Mrs. Mulligan, severely.

Aggie paid little attention to her mother, but went on about the hat.

"I could put a green feather in it. Pa would like it then, I know."

"You better put a pitchfork," said Jamie. "He would like that better."

"Now children, I won't have any back talk among yez."

But Aggie was determined to have it out.

"What do you think, ma? Jamie wants us to move out of the Lane."

"What!" said Mrs. Mulligan, aghast.

"Because, ma," said Jamie, "I don't think it's a nice place for the children to grow up in. You know environment counts for so much."

"Don't be trying any of your big words on me. I'll not stand it," said Mrs. Mulligan, angrily. "If it's any disease yez is afraid of, say so."

"Why, ma, it means your surroundings, place you live, you know."

"Why didn't you say so, then? I always told your pa too much book larning would be your ruination; and I'll tell your pa about your highfalutin ideas. Me leave Finnigan's Lane, where all me friends are? Yez are crazy, Jamie, to want me to do it. Hasn't Aggie's young man just engaged two rooms over the bakery? No, Jamie; yez better go yerself, if ye can't be contint wid us," said Mrs. Mulligan, wiping away a tear.

"Now, ma, don't misunderstand me. It's not healthy nere for the children. There's no drainage."

"Not healthy! Isn't it? Go long wid your nonsense, Jamie. There's no fatter nor rosier children than mine anywhere to be found. Look at Dinny, didn't he take the prize for bein' the fattest by at the picnic; and yez talk about health and drainage. There's more fever and sickness among the rich than we iver knew of. Yez know that, too. Go into any of your swell parks and see the puny little bits av children wid their nurse-maids. Niver a bit av play to them at all, at all. Just grewed up men an women, all starched up so they can't breathe the air the good Lord put here for thim."

"Now, ma, your preaching again. Just listen to me for a while," said Aggie. "What are you going to give Miss Pemberton for a wedding present?"

"Sure, I don't know, Aggie. I have a nice piece of crochet I could put on an apron; but the likes of her don't wear aprons."

"Make her some nice Limerick lace, ma. You can make it lovely."

"That's just what I'll be after doin'. Mrs. Israel is making her a piece of Spatchel work, and Mrs. Burgomeister is going to send her a fruit cake."

"They got nerve!" said Aggie, indignantly. "She don't know them."

"Aggie, they met her here wan day on the lawn, and she was that courteous to them, they ain't niver forgot it. She gave thim a five dollar bill apiece, though I niver knowed it till next day."

"I remember it now, ma. You had a party, too, that day."

"Indeed, we did, Aggie."

"I better get a move on me, ma; there's the whistle blowing now."

So saying, Aggie rushed off to get to the store in time to escape a reprimand from her employer. Jamie had gone some time before. After the children, as she still called them, had left, she sat down to finish her dinner; all the time her mind was on Jamie and his idea of leaving the Lane. Mr. Mulligan was more ambitious than his wife. He had often expressed a wish to live in the country, but never mentioned the fact in his wife's presence, knowing how attached she was to the Lane. He was trying to lay away all he could spare from his wages, in the hopes of some day being able to gratify this wish. In him Jamie had a champion. They both wished for different surroundings.

Jamie had told Aggie of his aspirations. She had kept his secret until now. He had exasperated her by alluding to her red hair, the bane of her existence.

On towards three o'clock Mrs. Israel and Mrs. Burgomeister made their reappearance; now that the Brady woman was gone, they could talk more freely.

Mrs. Mulligan showed them several gifts Esther had given her; they admired them, rather enjoying her acquaintance with the rich Miss Pemberton.

"Did you ask Miss Pemberton if she could find my Ikey some work outdoors?" pathetically asked Mrs. Israel.

"Sure I did; and told her the factory was just killin' the darlint, and yez took him to the free dispensary and the doctor said he must be outdoors. I told her how he wasn't fitten for a newsby, cause thim bys would trow him down with their rushing ways, runnin' like haythens after iverybody, and says she, 'Sure, Mrs. Mulligan, I kin get him a job with Madame la Mode; it's herself was just wishing she had a nice by to deliver the dresses to the fine ladies.' Sure an he would be trigged out so fine, Mrs. Israel. A blue suit, mind ye, with a strip of goold down the leg of his pants. She calls them trousers; all thim swells does; and some goold on his coller and a peaked cap with a goold band."

Mrs. Israel's eyes were wide open with astonishment, her Ikey to be dressed like that. She could hardly comprehend the amount of gold he would have on his person. At last she recovered her speech.

"Ist dat possible, Mrs. Mulligan, that my Ikey look so fine?"

"Sure, Mrs. Israel, just like an officer on the foorce."

"Ach; but she was goot was Miss Pemberton."

Mrs. Burgomeister's position put her above wanting help. She had no children, and her mother was prosperous for that neighborhood, having the only bakery in the Lane, giving employment to her son-in-law, who hoped some day to inherit the business through his wife.

"You vas telling us so," said Mrs. Burgomeister, "about the fine clothes Miss Pemberton was going to give you."

"Sure," said Mrs. Mulligan, "she don't want to take thim old duds with her. I'm thinking that's why she is givin' them to me. Most of thim has niver been hardly worn. Yez all shall have some," said the generous Mrs. Mulligan. "Mr. Hennessy is goin' up in his express wagon to git thim for me tomorry. If yez would like a ride wid me, sure ye can go and welcome. We will go up the alley way back of the carriage house. I can't ask yez in, though."

They never expected such a thing; they knew their friend was a privileged character at the Avenue. They were satisfied to remain in the alley if they went. Mrs. Burgomeister

declined the invitation. Riding was no treat to her. She could ride on the bakery wagon, whenever she wished. Not so with Mrs. Israel. She never had a chance to ride, and gladly accepted the offer.

The blowing of the factory whistle reminded them of the hour. Mrs. Israel left hurriedly. "I must get my Ike some supper; he comes home soon now." Mrs. Burgomeister had a like excuse. Mrs. Mulligan's younger children were where they always were, in the street; just now they were running after a wagon to get a ride.

Before she had supper ready, Mr. Mulligan came in from work. He washed himself in the tin basin at the back door, coming into the kitchen to dry himself on the roller towel. Jamie was the next to arrive. He went to his room and made some preparations for the meal. When he came into the kitchen, his mother was busy trying to make up for lost time.

"Ma," he said, "Mr. Fairchild wrote to me to-day to know if I knew of any married man that would take the place of gardener for him. He need not have any experience. A house and ten acres would be provided for him and his family two miles from Mr. Fairchild's residence. I have been trying to think of some family who would be glad of it. Just think, pa, a house and ten acres, rent free, and big pay besides."

Mr. Mulligan had said very little, but was doing a lot of thinking. It was just the job he would like. Mrs. Mulligan said nothing. She was too busy getting the supper to pay much attention. Aggie had come in in the meantime. It did not interest her. She was going to be married soon. Dinny, Terence and Mary, the remaining children, were too busy engaged in trying to get the dog and cat to fight to hear anything. As soon as they sat down to the supper table, Jamie brought the question up again, and asked his father if he knew any one he could recommend. Mr. Mulligan thought awhile and then turned to his wife, saying, "Maggie, how would you like me to take the job? I am tired of carrying bricks. I'm not strong like I used to be and it hurts me back carrying the hod all day."

"Sure, James, yez don't mean you would want to leave the Lane to take that job?"

"Why, Maggie, it would be easier work and better pay, a good house to live in, and nice for the children. They've never had a chance to get out in a field and kick up their heels in their life; and I am always afraid some wagon'll run over them, playing out in the streets all the time.

"Aggie, what do you think of it?" he said.

"Well, pa, bein' as me and John will be married so soon, it's not much good me having a say; but it would be real nice to be near Uncle Terence."

"That's right, ma," said Jamie. "Uncle is on the police force in New York."

This had the effect of rousing Mrs. Mulligan to action.

"Sure, I forgot all about Terence being on the foorce. It's a fine looking man, he is too, if his sister do say it. Six feet two in his stocking feet," she said with honest pride.

"Well, pa," said Jamie, "would you like me to suggest you to Mr. Fairchild for the place?"

"It all lies with your ma. If she would be willing to go, I would like it above all things. I think it would be better for all of us," he said.

Mrs. Mulligan found it hard to decide. She would have to leave her friends to whom she was very much attached. Jamie and Aggie had outgrown her control, and were both doing well in their way.

Aggie's future husband was an expressman with a good business ahead of him. He was an industrious young man of good habits, and Mrs. Mulligan felt if she should decide on going, Aggie would be in good hands.

"Sure, I'd like till tomorry to think it over, James."

"All right, Maggie, that will be time enough."

They rose from the table, Mrs. Mulligan and Aggie attending to the dishes, while Jamie and his father talked over the advantages of such a move. When the evening work was finished, Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan sat amusing the younger children until bedtime.

During the night Mrs. Israel called to Mrs. Mulligan to come quick, her Ikey was so sick. The kind-hearted Mrs.

Mulligan went as quick as she could next door to Mrs. Israel's comfortless rooms. The sight of Ikey's wan face decided her future.

"Sure, what ails the darlint?" she asked.

"He hav one chill," said the frightened mother. "He needs hav fresh air, the doctor says," sobbed his poor mother.

"I hav sewed all night, and can't make moneys enough," said the tired, worn-out Mrs. Israel. As soon as her boy took sick she called for her staunch friend, Mrs. Mulligan.

"He must have frish air and you, too, Mrs. Israel," she said, putting her strong arms around her frail friend, who cried harder than ever at the affectionate demonstration of her friend.

"Just cry all yez want to. Yez will come right with us. We aren't goin' to lave you here all alone. Ikey will get good and strong there. They do be telling me it's a fine place he has."

But Mrs. Israel heard nothing. She cried as if her heart would break; her life had run on hard lines, and she was worn out with the struggle of battling for an existence. As soon as she was old enough, she was put to work in a factory; and before she was even grown, you might say, married a factory hand. Neither knew anything but toil from their childhood. After Ikey was born, Mrs. Israel's health gave way. The ravages of consumption already had her husband in its grasp, and soon she was left alone to take up the burden of breadwinner for herself and child. Having so little strength, she could only earn a small pittance; and if it had not been for the generosity of her neighbor, Mrs. Mulligan, many a time she would have gone to bed hungry. As soon as Ikey was old enough, he, too, was cast into the mill of toil to grind out his daily bread. Was it any wonder they both fell under the burden they were forced to carry?

Mrs. Mulligan remained all night with Mrs. Israel; and when daylight came, Ikey showed signs of improvement. So Mrs. Mulligan went home to get the family's breakfast. Mr. Mulligan was already up and busily engaged in raking

out the ashes from the stove preparatory to lighting the fire. He looked up as his wife entered.

"How is the boy?" he asked.

"He's purty sick, James; and it's yourself must be after taking Mr. Fairchild's job. Ikey and his mother must have more frish air, so the doctor do be saying."

"But, Maggie, suppose Mr. Fairchild objects to so many."

"He won't do nothin' of the sort, James; for I'll be after speaking to Miss Esther and she will fix it. Sure, what difference do two be making. There will only be siven of us; that's no family at all, James. Ye see, Aggie will be getting married, and Jamie will live uptown. He don't like the Lane any more."

In the midst of the discussion, Jamie came in.

"Well, pa, what will I write to Mr. Fairchild! Do you want it? It's a fine chance; one in a lifetime."

"Maggie, it's for you to say," he said, turning to his wife.

"I say go thin. We must get Ikey out of here."

"Are you going to take Ikey and Mrs. Israel with you, ma, if pa gets the job?"

"Of coorse I am. If Ikey and his mother don't go, I don't go; but yez needn't mintion thim when ye write to Mr. Fairchild."

Jamie gave a prolonged whistle.

"So that's the way the wind blows," he exclaimed.

After the breakfast was over and the family gone, Mrs. Mulligan ran in with something for Mrs. Israel to eat. Ikey was dressed and eating his breakfast.

"He looks better already," she remarked, "but wait till yez hear what I have to say."

And she told them of the prospective trip. Mrs. Israel burst into tears.

"Vat will I do mitout you, mine friend?"

"Yez are coming wid us," replied Mrs. Mulligan. "Ye know nobody but me and I can't lave yez behind. Sure I wouldn't sleep a wink with yez and Ikey so far away from me. We will all go together. Don't tell that Brady woman about our goin'. Let her find it out, the best way she can. She's too inquisitive altogether."

"Ach, Mrs. Mulligan, you vas so goot to me. I tinks I die if you go way from here."

"Sure, when we get there," went on Mrs. Mulligan, "Ikey can run and jump and holler all his might. There will be no policeman there wanting to arrist him for disturbing the peace. Ye won't know the by in a few months. Now Mrs. Israel I must be goin' back. The expressman will be here purty soon, and thin we will have our ride. Make Ikey good and warm; he'll enjoy it too."

It was not long before the expressman came in view. Mrs. Israel was watching eagerly for his approach. The ride meant a great treat to her and Ikey.

As he drew near, Mrs. Mulligan called out to her to come. It took them only a short time to mount the seat with the driver, Ikey sitting on a box behind them. As soon as they got out of the Lane, they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the ride.

"It feels queer to be up so high, don't it?" said Mrs. Mulligan, as she looked at Mrs. Israel, whose face had brightened up wonderfully.

"It makes me feel so goot, already," replied Mrs. Israel.

"How you likes it, Ikey?" she asked, turning around to her boy. But he was so intent looking at the buildings that he did not hear her. She nudged Mrs. Mulligan and pointed to Ikey, who was taking in everything.

"Sure, it's doin' the by good. The doctor was right when he said it was frish air he needed."

The expressman drove them through the park on the way to the Avenue, much to his passengers' delight.

"There's a tree," said Ikey, as he entered it.

"Sure, yez will see a whole forest of thim, Ikey, further on."

So surprise after surprise opened up for Ikey.

As they turned into the alley back of the Pemberton mansion, Mrs. Mulligan entertained Mrs. Israel with the names of the residents whose back entrances they were passing. When they came to the Pemberton residence, the express stopped, and they dismounted. Mrs. Israel and

Ikey looked through the iron railing while Mrs. Mulligan entered and went to the rear of the house.

"When I get rich," said Ikey, "I am going to have grass in my yard," the green lawn having captivated his fancy. Mrs. Israel was rather timid about looking into people's yards, but Ikey had no fear. He still gazed in at the trees and flowers and watched the birds with childish interest.

"Will there be birds and flowers and grass where Mrs. Mulligan is going to take us?" he inquired.

"Yes," answered his mother, "and beautiful water in a river mit boats on it, too."

Ikey had never seen a boat, so did not feel the interest in it that his mother did. Her mind wandered back to the Rhine, where her girlish days were spent, and the boat that used to sail past her home there.

The expressman had tied up and was waiting for instructions from Mrs. Mulligan before entering. As soon as the latter reached the kitchen door, her niece was there to meet her.

"Miss Esther said for you to go upstairs to her, when you came."

She went up the back stairs and knocked loudly on the wall. Esther came to see what caused the noise.

"It's you, Maggie, is it? Come in here," she said as she led the way into one of the rooms. There were the clothes still stacked up on the bed.

Mrs. Mulligan looked around in alarm. The red hat was missing, and Aggie had cautioned her the last thing, not to forget it.

"Miss Esther," she said, "sure, I have the expressman outside, and I know your time to be precious, wid so much to do. I better be gettin' the clothes gathered up."

So saying she began folding them up, making two big bundles of them. The hat was still worrying her; she took several surreptitious glances around the room, but no red hat was to be seen, although there were several others lying on a table nearby. She could not bring herself to leave without it, especially as she had laid so much stress on its

beauty. After a great deal of hesitation, she broached the subject.

"Miss Esther," she began, "did yez not be after showin' me a red hat the other day, that yez would be givin' me."

"A red hat? Let me see. Yes; there was one somewhere. I only wore it once. I bought it to please mother, but never liked it; it was too bizarre for my taste."

Mrs. Mulligan thought to herself. "So she bought it at a bazaar; well, I'll not be tellin' that to Aggie, or she will be thinking it was put up at a raffle and is some cheap affair."

Esther looked everywhere, but all to no purpose.

"That's strange," she remarked. "I remember now it was here this morning. I'll ring for Mamie; she was here yesterday looking at it, and took a great fancy to it. Maybe she put it somewhere out of the dust."

Mamie answered the summons, and when Esther inquired about the hat she colored guiltily.

"It's in me room, Miss Esther," she replied.

"Go and get it, Mamie, your aunt wants it."

Mamie returned with the treasure she hoped to possess and handed it grudgingly to her aunt, who received it as she would a long lost friend, taking no notice of Mamie's scowling face.

"Sure, how could I face the neighbors widout it," she thought, as she laid it carefully back in its box, a precaution Mamie had taken.

"Now, Miss Esther, I better be goin'. Mrs. Israel and Ikey do be out there in the cold, waitin' for me, and the by was sick all night."

"What was the matter with him?" asked Esther, who remembered meeting his mother the time she visited Maggie in the Lane.

"The doctor says it's frish air he wants. I says it's somethin' to put in his stomach. Sure the by niver gets his fill."

"Do you mean to say, Maggie, he's half starved?"

"Pretty near whole starved, Miss Esther, I'm a thinking."

"That's terrible, Maggie. Leave your bundles here and

go and bring him and his mother in out of the cold. Take them into the kitchen, and tell Mamie to see that they get a good warm meal."

Mrs. Mulligan went to do as she was told, but was met by the now infuriated Mamie, who had worked herself into a passion over the loss of the red hat.

"You're a nice relation," she said, as soon as her aunt stepped into the kitchen, "to take the only thing I wanted in the bunch."

"What's the matter wid yez?" asked Mrs. Mulligan.

"You took that lovely hat," answered Mamie, snappishly.

"And who had a better right to it?" replied her aunt.

"Miss Esther giv it to me, and it's for Aggie I'm wanting it."

At this Mamie flew into a tantrum.

"Now, Mamie," said her aunt, "it's no use actin' up like that. Yez had better be doin' your work," and she told her of Miss Esther's message.

"I don't want that woman in my kitchen," she said, angrily.

"Don't yez talk about me frinds that way," said Mrs. Mulligan. "The poor woman has enough to bear widout your adding any to it. She's to have a hot meal; her and the by; and plinty of it. Do ye mind, that's Miss Esther's orders," and Mamie obeyed them to the letter.

Mrs. Israel and Ikey were called in; the warm kitchen felt very comfortable to them.

"This is the nicest place I ever was in," said Ikey, as he looked around at the shining copper saucepans, hanging on the tiled walls. The stove was just as bright as the saucepans, for Mamie was as proud of her kitchen as a high born dame would be of her drawing room. Mrs. Israel hardly spoke; it was all too grand in her estimation to criticise.

Mrs. Mulligan, in the meantime, was busy directing Mr. Hennessy, the expressman, as to his load. He gazed about looking at the fine furnishings in the room. Usually his business took him to flats "where," as he said, "there wasn't room to swing a cat."

"These stairs are so easy," he remarked, as he carried his load down.

"These are only the back stairs," said Mrs. Mulligan with an air of importance. "Yez ought to see the front ones. Sure they're just grand, and the carpets that soft yez just sink in them."

Mrs. Mulligan was proud of her intimacy at the "big house," as the servants called it.

The clothes were safely placed in the wagon, Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel taking their seats as before with the driver, while Ikey sat on the box behind them. Mrs. Mulligan was in high spirits. Now she had something tangible to show her neighbors concerning her visit to the Avenue.

"We won't be after lettin' that Brady woman see a thing," she said.

The hot meal, together with the drive before and after, were doing wonders for Mrs. Israel and Ikey. The former's usually expressionless face was brightening up under the pleasant influence of change of scene. She seldom left the Lane, being too poor to spare the money to ride on the cars, and not having strength to walk. She was flowing over with gratitude to Mrs. Mulligan, who made the trip possible; for, without her assistance, Ikey could not have afforded to take a day off. They needed every cent his small hands could earn. It was with a feeling of intense regret that she dismounted from the wagon at Mrs. Mulligan's door. She had not had such an enjoyable day for many years. Her kind-hearted friend invited her in to have supper with them, knowing well that the poor woman had nothing but bread at home. It took a great deal of persuasion to make her accept.

"Sure, yez must eat with us, Mrs. Israel," she had said to her guest. "It's a fine supper we will be having to-night."

While Mrs. Mulligan bustled about getting the meal, Mrs. Israel sat near the stove. She had not often an opportunity to be so comfortable. She kept so quiet that Mrs. Mulligan asked her if she were sick.

"No, mine goot frent, I say notings, because I am just so happy. You vas so goot to me and Ikey."

The latter was running and shouting as Mrs. Mulligan had never heard him before.

"It's the frish air," she thought. "Sure, thim doctors knows their business better thin I thought they did."

By the time the supper was ready the rest of the family had come home from their various occupations.

The principal subject of conversation during the meal was Mrs. Mulligan's trip to the Avenue. She laid particular stress on Miss Esther's kind treatment of her friend. She omitted the details of the temporary loss of the hat, telling Aggie privately later how near she came to losing the red hat.

"And sure, Aggie, I have a little disappointment for yez. Yer father won't niver listen to yez being married in a red hat. Sure, he says, it would look unseemingly in the house of God. So yez had better lay it away and whin we go to New York, yez can wear it in peace. Yer father won't know anything about it; and thin he can't worry. For, do ye mind, what the eye don't see, the heart don't feel."

"How do you know you're going to New York?" said Aggie.

"Didn't I tell yez. Jamie got a tellygraft from Mr. Fairchild, saying: 'Tell your father and mother to come as soon as possible.' And he is that kind, he has asked Mr. Seymour to put us on the train, so we can't go wrong."

The matter was talked over by the family. Aggie was to be married before they left. Her wedding was to be very quiet, as she said: "Nobody but us and Mame Flynn. She is going to stand up with me and when it's over, we will go to the restaurant and have dinner, and that ends it so far as you folks is concerned. Maybe me and John will go to the park, but that's nobody's business but ours."

Mrs. Mulligan felt rather hurt at such a wedding; she would have liked them to come to the house and entertain their friends, and, as she said, "have some fun."

"Sure, a weddin's nothin without hilarity."

But Aggie was firm.

"Yez could get married Friday, and we could lave Saturday."

"Me get married on Friday," said Aggie, with a toss of her head, "on such an unlucky day! No, ma'am; no Friday for me."

"How would Thursday do, then, Aggie?"

"Then you would have bad luck, ma, moving on Friday."

"That's so," said Mrs. Mulligan.

"There's nothing left," said Mr. Mulligan, "but for Aggie to be married on Monday."

So it was settled that way.

The wedding day soon came round. Aggie spent most of the morning dressing. As soon as she was ready the family walked to a nearby church. Mrs. Israel looked wistfully after them. She would like to have gone, too; but was not asked, as Aggie said she did not want any outsiders at her wedding. It was all over in a short time, and Aggie, now Mrs. John O'Brien, was beaming with happiness, as she received the family's congratulations. They went to a nearby restaurant as Aggie had planned for dinner. As Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan turned homeward, followed by Jamie and the younger children, he said, "Maggie, I am glad Aggie got such a good man. She has been a very headstrong girl, and hard to manage, and it's to your credit, she turned out as she did. There was a time when I saw it was hard work for you to control her."

"Sure," answered Mrs. Mulligan, "she was very hard to make mind, but I had me own way of doin' it, and now she will give her man no trouble at all. Does yez mind the time I had to watch her nights to keep her from goin' out?"

"I do, Maggie. You done your work well; you have made a good mother to our children."

"I've tried to, James."

"Say, ma, didn't Aggie look swell in that velvet hat?" said Jamie, catching up with his parents.

"That's what she did, Jamie."

"Yes and Aggie must keep together while we are gone, and if she don't make John a good wife I want yez to tell me."

"All right, ma. We'll write to you and pa every week."

"Do, Jamie; yez was always a good by."

"And you were a good mother to me or I would not be a good boy," replied Jamie.

By this time they had reached home, and found Mrs. Israel anxiously waiting to hear about the wedding. Mrs. Mulligan told the particulars while she prepared the evening meal. After they had eaten it, she asked Mrs. Israel if she had her things packed. Mrs. Israel nodded assent.

"I came to help you once alreaty," she said.

So with willing hands to help them, Mr. Mulligan and Jamie soon packed their few belongings. Mr. Fairchild had written that morning to inform them the house was completely furnished, so that there would be no necessity to bring any furniture with them. They concluded to let Aggie have it. After wishing Mrs. Israel good-night, they all retired to sleep for the last time in Finnigan's Lane.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MULLIGANS' NEW HOME.

"Esther," said Tom, "I had a letter from Fred, asking me to help the Mulligans off, and see that they don't get on the wrong train for New York, so I thought I'd go down and attend to them; they are to leave this morning."

Esther gave Tom the directions to Finnigan's Lane. He went off whistling a popular tune. Esther smiled at his happy frame of mind.

"He will have his hands full," she thought. "He will have no trouble with Maggie and her husband, but the younger ones he will find very hard to manage. He is a stranger to their ways."

Profiting by Esther's experience, he got the right car. It was a new experiment to him, to undertake to handle a

strange family and see them safely on their way. As he stepped off the car, a young man got off, too. They both walked down the Lane. Tom did not fancy the locality, so stood and waited until the young man came up to him, and asked him if he could direct him to Mrs. Mulligan's.

"Yes, sir, I can," he answered. "She's my mother. Do you wish to see her? I am her son Jamie."

Tom was greatly relieved.

"Yes," he said, "Mr. Fairchild asked me to help your parents off, and see them safely on their way."

"We have everything packed," replied Jamie, "and ma and pa will be ready by now. I cannot go to the train with them, so came here to say good-bye."

As they stopped at the door Tom wondered how any one could live in such a place. He found the family all in readiness, and called the waiting expressman and told him to load the trunks and boxes they had, and started him off to the train.

As the expressman drove off Mrs. Brady came to the door and stood with her arms akimbo.

"I ain't sorry to see her go," she said to one of her neighbors. "She always did hold herself above us."

Mrs. Mulligan had incurred the enmity of most of the neighborhood by keeping her children neat and clean. This was an unusual thing with the rest of them, and they resented it, on the ground that Mrs. Mulligan was putting on airs, and didn't want to associate with them.

Mrs. Burgomeister came running down the Lane to say good-bye to her friend.

"I was so afraids I would not see you," she said. "The expressman is gone once alreaty."

"Sure, I wouldn't be after not saying good-bye and laving yez like that, Mrs. Burgomeister," said Mrs. Mulligan.

Mrs. Israel was standing by her side blushing in some of Esther's cast off apparel. Mrs. Mulligan had helped her put on a warm woollen dress. As she pinned it into shape, Mrs. Israel said, "This is all too grand for me, mine frent. The ladies will tinks I am not careful mit my moneys."

"Niver mind what anny one says. Yez look like a swell, that's what yez does, Mrs. Israel."

The meek Mrs. Israel blushed again. She had no aspirations in that direction and felt decidedly uncomfortable "dressed up," as she called it.

After the last good-byes were said Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel put their hats on, both of them being some of Esther's gifts. The former had hard work to make the latter wear a black velvet hat with red velvet roses on it.

"I ought not to do so," said the timid little woman, but Mrs. Mulligan insisted on it. The result was they both left the Lane gorgeously attired, so much so that the neighbors made audible remarks as they passed on to the car. Mrs. Mulligan held her head high in the air, but poor nervous Mrs. Israel seemed to feel ashamed of her grandeur, and kept her eyes persistently on the ground. Tom made some complimentary remarks on their appearance, he having recognized Esther's discarded hats.

"Sure, foine feathers do be making foine burds," said Mrs. Mulligan, pleased with Tom's flattery.

As they walked towards the car, Tom cautioned them to keep together, which they did, and managed to get to the car with little delay. Once inside they were no more trouble until it came time to transfer. Tom again warned them to keep near each other, but the instant the car stopped Dinny ran across the street to catch another car, Mrs. Mulligan in close pursuit.

"That by will be the death of me," she said, as she went after him, leaving Mrs. Israel in charge of the other two children.

"Yez niver can take your eye off that by a minute."

Just as he was stepping on the car, Mrs. Mulligan caught him by the collar, pulled him back and shook him vigorously.

"Ain't yez ashamed of yourself, Dinny, to be givin' so much trouble, and Mr. Seymour bein' that kind to us. Yez must kape by the side av me; does yez mind, now."

"Yes, um," said the now thoroughly frightened Dinny, whose mother had failed to relax the hold she had on his

collar, and still held him in a vise-like grip. She dragged him back to the car where the rest of the family were seated waiting for them, while the conductor rang the bell furiously, angry at the delay they had caused.

"Hurry up, ma'am," he said, as she laboriously pulled herself and the recreant Dinny up the steps of the car. They got started once more, and as there was no more transferring, they reached the station safely.

Tom bought the tickets, and saw that they were all in their seats and went out to see if the trunks had arrived. Being answered in the affirmative, he went back to the train and gave the checks to Mrs. Mulligan, who had forgotten all about them in the excitement.

"Sure, it was very kind of yez to see to them, Mr. Seymour. Thank ye, sir," she said.

Tom raised his hat and wished them all good-bye. Before he left the train, he called the train boy and handing him some money told him to treat the children to whatever he had, pointing to where they sat.

"All right, sir, I will," he replied.

"Ain't Mr. Seymour a nice gentleman?" said Dinny, who had quite recovered from his scolding.

"Sure he is that," said Mrs. Mulligan gratefully.

As soon as the cars began to move, Dinny saw another boy getting a drink of water; he squeezed out of the seat and went to get one, too.

"Where are yez goin', Dinny?" asked his mother.

"To get a drink of water."

This was the signal for Terence, Mary, and Ikey to want a drink of water, too. She rose and went with them to the water tank at the end of the car. Just as they were seated again the train boy came along with peanuts. He threw a bag into the lap of each child.

"Sure, one's enough; we ain't got anny money to trow away," said Mrs. Mulligan.

"You don't have to pay for these," said the train boy.

"Does yez give free peanuts to the children on these trains?" asked Mrs. Mulligan in surprise.

"No, ma'am, but the gentleman that bought your tickets

paid for them. You will get oranges, candy and chewing gum yet. It's all paid for," said the train boy pleasantly.

"Don't that be rale kind of Mr. Seymour?" said Mrs. Mulligan, turning to her husband.

"Yes," he replied, "it was a fortunate day for all of us that you worked for Miss Pemberton's family."

"Sure, she's an angel, that girl is, and it's meself that's glad that she is after gettin' such a fine man."

Mrs. Israel had kept so quiet. When Mrs. Mulligan looked over into the seat where she was to speak to her, she found she was fast asleep.

"I ought to wake her up; sure, she'll see nothin'," said Mrs. Mulligan.

But her husband replied, "Let her sleep, poor woman."

"What are you going to do with her and Ikey when we get there?" asked Mr. Mulligan of his wife.

"I am goin' to kape thim until they get good and strong. Mrs. Israel is goin' to take in sewing; she do be that neat, she can get all she can do. And Ikey, he must go to school, James, and get some book larning and thin when his mother is too old to work, he can be after taking care of her, poor soul."

"I am afraid he won't have her to take care of by then, Maggie."

"Things don't be fixed right in this world, somehow," said Mrs. Mulligan. "A strong body should always go wid the poor; thin they would have strength to work for their living. It's all right for the rich to be delicate," she continued, "but the poor has no right to get sick, because they haven't the money or the time to spare."

"But, Maggie," said her husband, "people can't help being sick and poor."

"Sure, I know they can't; and talking don't make it anny better. We are both strong and healthy, James, and we must take care of Mrs. Israel and Ikey, who are both weak."

And the good-hearted woman looked at her friend, who was still sleeping.

"Maggie, you are a good woman," said her husband. "It's a pity we are not rich enough to help all our friends."

"Well, yez see, James, if ivery one that had a little were to help the others that didn't, how aisy it would be."

"In theory, Maggie; but how about the practice of it?"

Here Mrs. Israel woke up with a start.

"We will be late for work, Ikey," she said.

"Sure, yez are not goin' to work. Yez are goin' to New York. It's dreaming ye are," laughed Mrs. Mulligan.

"Ach," said Mrs. Israel, with a wan smile, "I forgets. I tinks I am late for works. Did I go to sleeps?" she asked.

"Yez did; the rest is good for ye."

"I sleeps notins last night, I just tinks all the time of your kindness, mine frent," said the grateful Mrs. Israel.

"Sure, yez mustn't mention such trifles at all. Yez would do the same for me, if yez had a man and I didn't," replied Mrs. Mulligan.

The children were so absorbed watching everything that they were no trouble to take care of. Dinny started through the cars, but turned back as he saw the train boy coming in their direction with a basketful of oranges. He gave each of the children one and a couple to the grown people. Ikey never had an orange before and caressed it lovingly.

"It was too nice to eat," he said, as Mrs. Mulligan urged him to taste it. Her husband gave him his, so Ikey could keep his treasure. The Mulligans often had such treats, it being the custom of the Pembertons to allow Maggie to have the remains of the frequent suppers they gave. In this way many delicacies came into the home that otherwise they never would have tasted.

As soon as the oranges were eaten, the train boy returned with chewing gum.

"That's the last of the treat," he said, as he threw each of the children a piece of gum. "We will soon be in New York," he said.

Dinny was the first to convey his to his mouth, and in his haste bit his tongue. He screamed with pain, and set up such a terrible howl that the passengers glared angrily at him and his mother, as the latter tried to quiet him.

"Dinny, me by, don't take on so"; but Dinny did take on and kept on, regardless of the mutterings of the passengers.

"Sure, it's ashamed of ye I am," said Mrs. Mulligan. "After all the nice things Mr. Seymour got for yez: Oranges, candy and gum."

The mention of the latter caused him to stop and look for his gum. It was on the floor of the car, where it had fallen when he opened his mouth to scream. He picked it up, wiped it on his coat sleeve, and put it in his mouth, regardless of the look of disgust from one of the passengers. Peace was now restored and the angry passengers turned to their newspapers and magazines again, and Dinny was soon forgotten.

Tom had sent word to Fred telling him the Mulligans were on their way, and what time to meet them. Fred knew Maggie by sight, having seen her quite often on her visits to the Avenue. He had never met Mr. Mulligan, but was satisfied to take him on Esther's recommendation.

When they alighted from the train, Mrs. Mulligan looked around for Mr. Fairchild. She soon recognized him, and took her husband forward to introduce him. Fred was pleased with his straightforward manner, and thought, "This is just the man I want."

While he talked with Mr. Mulligan, Mrs. Mulligan gathered up the children, who had scattered about the station. She introduced them to Mr. Fairchild, including Mrs. Israel and Ikey. He inquired if the latter were relatives.

"No, sir; only friends. Sure, the work in the factory was killin' her and her by, and I brought 'em along wid us."

"My wife is always helping someone," said Mr. Mulligan, apologizing for the extra addition to the family.

"I am glad she has such a warm heart," said Fred. "I often wish I could help more than I do."

"My wife can probably give your friend some easy work, and the boy——"

"He is goin' to school," put in Mrs. Mulligan, authoritatively.

"That's right," said Fred, "I don't like to see a child

brought up in ignorance, especially when good free schools are provided for them."

Fred took them to the ferry, as they went by steamer. They were speechless. Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel were the only ones who had ever been on a steamer before, each of them having crossed the water from their old homes to land in this country. Mr. Mulligan was born here, and so were the children, but all of them had lived inland, and had no experience with the ocean.

Ikey was overcome with it all. His life had been one of sorrow and biting poverty that knew nothing but a bare existence. No little treats, common to even the poorest children, had ever brightened his childhood days. This was the first ray of sunshine that had ever crossed his path. It was too much for his weak, nervous little body, and he burst into tears. No one could understand it but his mother. Mrs. Mulligan felt concerned about him.

"Don't cry, Ikey, me darlint, we will soon be there, the gentleman says, and yez will have a good dinner and play on the nice grass."

Dinny could not fathom it.

"What makes Ikey cry?" he asked. "Is it cos he don't like the steamer?"

"No, child," replied his mother, "Ikey's tired out."

"Yez ought to be very thankful yez has a father to work for ye, and feed and clothe ye; poor Ikey niver knowed his, and has had to work in the factory since he was knee high; but he will niver do it agin while I have a breath in me body. He is goin' to live wid us, poor by. He don't eat mor'n a bird."

She put her arms around the now sobbing Ikey and drew him towards her. Soon he was fast asleep and remained so until they came to the landing. As soon as they were landed Mr. Fairchild conducted them to a spring wagon that was standing nearby, his own carriage being a little way off. He told Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel to take seats in the carriage, and gave the coachman directions to take them to the gardener's house. As they drove away he took his seat with the Mulligans in the wagon.

"Did yez iver see the likes?" said Mrs. Mulligan, as she leaned back on the comfortable cushions. "We a-ridin' in his carriage, and him ridin' on the wagon with James and the children. That's what I call a rale gintleman."

But Fred was getting more credit than he deserved; his intention was to put the Mulligan family in the wagon and use the carriage himself, but he had not counted on the additional two that came with them. So he was obliged to rearrange the family, and to this was due the opportunity Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel had of driving to their new home in the Fairchild family barouche.

As the carriage drove up to the door, Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel stepped out, and sat on the porch of the house awaiting the arrival of the wagon with the rest of the family. They did not have long to wait. As it stopped, Fred jumped out and unlocked the door, and invited the newcomers inside. Mrs. Mulligan threw up her hands in wonder at the fine furniture which Fred had provided for their use.

"Sure, it's illigant, Mr. Fairchild," she said, as he showed her each room.

"I hope you will be comfortable and satisfied here, Mrs. Mulligan," he said as he was about to leave.

"Sure, we would be hard to please if we weren't, sir."

So wishing them all a pleasant time in their new home, he left them, promising to come in the morning to instruct Mr. Mulligan in his duties and talk business with him. Turning back he called out, "Mulligan, you had better put the horse in the barn. It's for you and your family's use. I forgot to tell you that."

"Thank you, sir," said James, "I'll do it at once."

Suiting the action to the word, he unhitched immediately and put away the horse and wagon.

Now that Mr. Fairchild had gone, they made a tour of inspection of the house. On coming to the kitchen Mrs. Mulligan opened the pantry to see the size of it.

"Come here, will yez, James, and see this."

They all accepted the invitation, and gazed in wonderment at the well-stocked shelves of the pantry.

"Yes, Maggie, Mr. Fairchild was telling me that his wife ordered a few groceries to be sent to the house, so as we would have something to start housekeeping on."

"A few, did he say? Why, there's forty or fifty dollars' worth there, I'm a-thinking, James," said Mrs. Mulligan. "Sure, yez will niver want to leave him, he's that kind."

"If it's at all possible," said Mr. Mulligan, "I'll stay in his employ the rest of my life, and, what's more, he'll never regret employing me. I like to work for such men. A man feels like doing more than he's paid for when he is treated like this."

Mrs. Mulligan assigned each one to his room. Ikey was to sleep in a room by himself. Mr. Mulligan insisted on this, when his wife suggested putting him in the room with Dinny.

"Our children have no inherited diseases, and I don't want them to sleep with Ikey on account of his father dying of consumption. Who knows but what the boy may inherit it? It's better to be on the safe side, Maggie."

So Ikey was given a room to himself; his mother the room next to his. Dinny and Terence had a room across the hall from their parents, and Mary had the next one to it.

There was still one spare room, so commodious was the house. After admiring the house and contents over and over again, Mr. Mulligan suggested that something to eat would not be out of place.

"The children must be very hungry, Maggie."

They all followed Mr. Mulligan to the kitchen, where he busied himself making a fire, while his wife inspected the contents of the pantry. She soon decided on what to have for the meal. Once the decision was made, it did not take long to prepare it, and before long they were enjoying their first meal in their new home. A happier family would be hard to find. The Mulligans were naturally of a contented disposition, and adapted themselves readily to their new surroundings. After the meal was over they explored the grounds around the house; ten acres looked an enormous piece of ground, after their close quarters in the Lane. The children were everywhere; their legs got more

exercise the first afternoon in their new home than they had before in all their lives.

Next morning Mr. Fairchild explained to Mulligan his duties.

"You are to oversee everything on the grounds. You will have two men under you to mow the lawns, trim trees and flowers, and to take charge of the hose and do the sprinkling. The greenhouses I will take care of myself, but will need your help. I have some exceedingly choice exotics which require a botanist's care, but I will want your assistance in repotting them. After you have worked among the flowers, you will soon learn to understand handling them, and I think enjoy your work," said Fred.

"I am sure I will, sir. It's all new to me; my life has been spent in the city, but I prefer living outdoors, and will do the best I can for you, sir."

After showing him the rest of the things that would be under his care, he remarked, "Now, Mulligan, I will pay you in advance the first month, if you wish it."

"No, sir," answered Mulligan, "I prefer to earn it first."

"The horse and wagon are for you and your family's use. You will find stores at the village. One of the men will go with you, or direct you there, whichever you wish. Is the salary satisfactory, Mulligan," asked Fred.

"Yes, sir; perfectly so. It's fifty dollars a month more than I could possibly earn at hod carrying."

"I think we thoroughly understand each other now, Mulligan," said Fred, "so to-morrow morning you can take charge. Come to the greenhouse first in the morning," he said as he walked off.

Mr. Mulligan went back to the gardener's house very happy over his prospects; "a good house, plenty of room for the children to run about, a good job with the kindest of masters; what more could a man want?" he thought.

Maggie was very pleased when he told her of the fine wages he was to get.

"Sure, yez is a lucky man, James, to get such a fine place with such a fine gentleman, too."

Mrs. Mulligan rose early next morning, and after her

household duties were well under way, she left Mrs. Israel in charge, while she took the four children to the school a mile off. Having placed them in the care of the teacher and answered the necessary questions as to their age and grades, she returned home and discussed it with Mrs. Israel.

"Ikey and Mary are in the same grade, do ye mind. Sure, it's a great thing for Ikey to be gettin' book larning."

"You vas goot to me and my Ikey; he never had no times to go to school, Mrs. Mulligan. He all the time hav to work," said Mrs. Israel.

"Niver you mind, purty soon he will be able to read the newspaper to you."

"You tinks he gets that smart, Mrs. Mulligan?"

"Sure," said the latter, "what's to hinder him. There's the makings of a fine by in Ikey, but he must run and jump, and not be afraid to holler. It's good for a by to holler; it makes his lungs strong," said Mrs. Mulligan.

Poor Mrs. Israel thought of his father, and his weak lungs and wondered if they had met Mrs. Mulligan then, if he could have been saved from the factory, which killed him. She knew, for the doctor told her, it was hard work, no nourishment and bad air that broke his health and hers, too. She wiped away the tears that came to her eyes at the memory of her husband so long dead.

In the morning Mulligan was at the greenhouse according to instructions. He waited for Mr. Fairchild, who came with his wife, whom he introduced to the "head gardener," as Mulligan was called.

"I want to show Mrs. Fairchild some of the flowers we are going to re-pot," said Fred, as he entered the greenhouse. "She is as great a lover of them as I am."

Mulligan watched Mabel as she bent over the flowers with her husband, and thought he had never seen a prettier face than hers. As he told his wife afterwards, "She looks just like an angel; that pure and beautiful."

"That's what makes him such a good man, James. Sure, there's a good woman behind ivery good man, do ye mind," said Mrs. Mulligan.

Mrs. Mulligan was very proud of her new home and her husband's employer and was never done praising both.

"Sure, I wish Mrs. Burgomeister was here to see it," she remarked to Mrs. Israel. "She thinks her mother's bakery is a great big place; what would she think of this foine house?"

"Och, Mrs. Mulligans, notins is too fine for you," replied Mrs. Israel.

"I'd give me eyes if that Brady woman could see the foine furniture we do be havin'. Did yez see how brazen she stood at her door and watched us lave the Lane," said Mrs. Mulligan, her eyes snapping at the remembrance of it.

The banging of the gate announced the arrival of the children from school, so the conversation was discontinued.

"Ma," said Dinny as he came into the house, "the teacher made me stand up for punishment. She's mean, too. I hate her," he said vehemently.

"Now, Dinny, I'll not have yez calling your teacher bad names. She's a beautiful lady and I'll not have ye bothering her. What did ye do?"

"I only poured some ink on the boy next to me. The other boys said he was as black as ink, and I thought I would put some on him, and see if he was that black."

"Now, Dinny, I'll not stand for anything like that. Mr. Fairchild is so kind to us. I never would have yez bring any trouble to him by yer bad conduct."

"He took a little girl's ribbon off her hair, too, ma," said Mary, who was very fond of telling on her brothers.

"I'll have none of yer tattling, Mary," said her mother, severely. "I just despise such things. I have a mind to whip ye now for it."

Mary slipped out of the room while her mother was questioning Dinny as to his behavior, knowing her mother would carry out her threat, as she never allowed one of her children to tell of the other's misdeeds. If they did do it, they were invariably punished for the despicable habit, for, as Mrs. Mulligan often said, "she had nothin' but contimpt for such business. A child that will be wantin'

to see his or her sisters or brothers punished for misbehaving will bear watching. Do ye mind, they do be nothin' but sneaks annyhow, and won't iver be a credit to their parents. Mark my word for that."

Ikey, in the meantime, was entertaining his mother with his lesson, which he was eager to have explained to him. Dinny was allowed to go, on promising to behave better in the future. Mrs. Mulligan now turned her attention to Ikey.

"How does yez like school?" she asked him.

"It's fine, Mrs. Mulligan; the teacher is so kind; she marked my lesson for tomorrow," and he showed Mrs. Mulligan where the pencil mark was in his book.

"Will you read it to me?" he asked with childish faith in her abilities. She was no scholar, but could read his simple lesson. He listened gravely as she read: "The cat is white." "The dog is black." "Will the dog bite?"

Mrs. Israel was astonished at Mrs. Mulligan's learning.

"Why, mine frent, I did not know you vas so goot a scholar. Where did you learn to read so goot alreatty?"

"Sure, I larnt me lessons in the ould country," she said, with honest pride.

"I wish I knows how to read," said Mrs. Israel.

"Sure, yez could larn from Ikey," replied Mrs. Mulligan.

"I tinks I try, mine frent."

As they heard Mr. Mulligan approaching, his wife busied herself getting the evening meal. He came to her into the kitchen and said: "One of the men brought the mail to the big house (meaning Mr. Fairchild's) and there was one from Jamie for us."

Mr. Mulligan read it aloud. Jamie was lonesome without them. He had been to Aggie's helping her to fit the furniture in her rooms, and ma wouldn't know Aggie, the letter went on, she is so interested in her home and her husband.

"I am glad to hear that," commented Mrs. Mulligan. "She will be steady enough whin she gets a few more years over her head. It's just age she wants, along wid a firm hand to govern her."

"I think John knows how to handle her," said Mr. Mul-

ligan. "He will keep her in check without her knowing it, and you will find she will make a good wife to him."

The letter closed with the small happenings of the neighbors, such as were of interest to the family.

"Jamie's a good boy to write to us so soon. Sure, it was good of him to help Aggie to fit her rooms," said Mrs. Mulligan, who was quite proud of her eldest son.

The Mulligans were now settled comfortably in their new home, and quite at ease. It was more than they ever expected; they were now in a fair way to become independent of their children in their old age—a thing Mr. Mulligan had always planned for. He was very sensitive about being a burden to any of his children. He never expected it to happen this early in his career. It was always a remote possibility in his reckoning.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TOM'S UNCLE AND AUNT COME TO THE WEDDING.

"Well, Tom," said Esther, when he came in the evening, "how did you get along with the Mulligans?"

"Fine," answered Tom. "Dinny gave us a little trouble crossing the street, and getting on the wrong car, but his mother was equal to the occasion. If he had any other kind of a mother I would tremble for his future, but she will keep him straight. I think it's a good thing for the boy that the family left Finnigan's Lane."

"Yes, it always surprised me," said Esther, "that the Mulligans wanted to live in such a place. She would not associate with the majority of the tenants there, and always seemed out of place among them."

"She took one of them with her," said Tom.

"Which one?" asked Esther, who knew Maggie only recognized two of her neighbors as fit companions for her.

"Mrs. Israel and her boy," replied Tom. "She said they were sick, and if she did not take them, they would die, as no one else cared enough about them to look after them."

"That's just like Maggie," said Esther. "She always reminds me of a big mother hen, stretching out her wings to cover some poor motherless chicken. Her heart and her pocketbook are always open to her less fortunate friends. It's a good thing she has a husband to earn money for her, or she would have nothing for herself. She can't resist the temptation to help everyone, but she draws the line at men. I believe I heard her say once, she would not help one, unless it was to bury him. She had some grievance then against them, but probably changed her mind after she married one."

"She seems to think James is all right. Now, I've rendered an account of how I put my time in. Pray, what have you been doing?" laughed Tom.

"Not much of anything; just keeping father company, while mother goes into raptures over the preparations for our wedding. I was thinking to-day, Tom, I would write to your uncle and aunt to come a few days before hand, so they would have a chance to rest up before the rest of the relatives arrived. They would feel more at home with us by then."

"That's just like you, Esther, always thinking of other people's comfort."

"Tom, let us go to the library and write it together."

They found Mr. Pemberton there, busy reading, as usual. He was an inveterate reader, and consequently well posted on the leading events of the day.

Esther told him of their intention. "That's a good idea," he replied. "I will enjoy their society, too. It's a long time since I had the pleasure of a good visit from them."

Tom and Esther sat down together and dictated a letter between them to the uncle and aunt. As soon as it was finished they dispatched it, so it would be in time for the morning mail.

If they could have seen the happiness it brought to the recipients, they would have felt well paid for their thoughtfulness.

"Isn't that good of them to think of us," said the uncle.

"I rather dreaded the crowd that would be there, and this will give us a chance to visit them, too."

"I am very anxious to see Esther; I have not had a chance to tell her one half of Tom's goodness," said Aunt Amelia.

"She probably knows more about it than we do," replied her husband. "He naturally will take her into his confidence; he was telling me when he was here, Amelia, how thoroughly they understood each other."

After discussing the letter Aunt Amelia went up stairs to look over her things, for she had been preparing all the week. She took her dress carefully out of its tissue paper wrappings, for she was old fashioned enough to put it away in that style. She inhaled the fragrance of the lavender that clung to it, as she unfolded it. She had lived before the days of waist and skirt hangers, and knew nothing of the comfort of boot trees, never having adopted such method in caring for her wardrobe. She smoothed each fold out lovingly. "To think I am going to my boy's wedding," she thought. "I am so glad my life was spared for this event." She laid her lace handkerchief and other little accessories beside the dress. Her husband came into the room at this time.

"Why, Amelia," he said, "you didn't take your dress out of the box did you? Sarah took such trouble to fold it for you."

"I thought I had better see if everything was perfect before I left home."

"Don't you think you had better take Sarah with you to help you to dress," said her husband.

"I hardly think it's necessary," she replied, "but if you think it is, why we will take her. I wanted to leave her in charge of the house."

"Kitty can take care of the house, Amelia. Sarah is so tasty about fixing up your hair, too," said her husband, who was anxious that she should look her best. "We are Tom's only relatives, and must do him justice. I want him and Esther to feel proud of you."

So it was decided to take Sarah as lady's maid for the occasion.

"Are our presents all ready, Amelia?" he asked. "We had better look them over."

She went to the drawer and brought out a couple of boxes containing silver spoons and forks. Her friends had tried to persuade her to buy cut glass or some choice piece of ware, but she was firm in her resolve to have silver. "When I was a girl," she said, "the brides all received silver, solid silver, not triple-plated affairs such as they use nowadays, and I prefer the old style," she said emphatically. "Glass and ware are liable to get chipped and broken, but silver will last a lifetime," she said, with pride.

After they had inspected the silver and laid the articles back into their boxes, she brought out her jewel casket and picked out several pieces of jewelry; one a magnificent diamond pendant.

"I am going to give this pendant to Esther. It was Tom's father's gift to his wife on her wedding day, and she never hardly wore it, poor girl," she said, sadly. The other jewels were gifts from her relatives and parents.

"I have kept them all these years for Tom's wife, and I am so happy to think that I lived to hand them to her, and tell her about the donors of each piece."

"I better get those few things of Tom's father's," said her husband, "and give them to him at the same time. I ought to have done it years ago, but I never could bring myself to undertake the task. I knew he would question me about them, and I could not bear to have those sad days recalled. Tom looks so like his father, it unnerves me to talk to him of such things. Yet he naturally wants to know all about them."

Aunt Amelia gathered up the jewels and put them back into the casket and laid it out of sight. She rang for Sarah, and directed her to fold the dress.

"Just as you had it before, Sarah; there was not one wrinkle in it, and pack our things, for we are going to leave to-morrow. I want you to come with me, Sarah, as I will need your help. My husband thinks you can arrange my hair better than I can. He is very anxious, Sarah, that I shall present a good appearance at the wedding."

"Yes, ma'am," said Sarah. "It does not seem possible that Mr. Tom is going to be married. I wonder will he remember me, ma'am," said Sarah.

She had lived with Aunt Amelia in her young days, and had a slight remembrance of Tom. She married later, but lost her husband, and returned to her old employers', intending to remain the rest of her days with them. Tom's uncle was not a wealthy man according to the rating in large cities, but was in very comfortable circumstances, and as Sarah had remarked to Kitty, "they belonged to very genteel folks."

Aunt Amelia hardly slept any during the night; she was too excited. It was seldom that she and her husband went off anywhere to visit, and she was so afraid that they might get on the wrong car, or Tom would not be there to meet them, or perhaps not see them if he *was* there. Tom had told them in the letter what car to take. In the morning Aunt Amelia awoke, tired and sleepy, but in the hurry of getting off, soon forgot it.

When the train arrived, Tom was there, and greeted them affectionately as they got off the train. He conducted them to the Pemberton carriage, which had been placed at his disposal, and soon they were speeding towards Esther's home.

"Do you remember me, Mr. Tom?" asked Sarah as she took her seat beside her mistress. But Tom did not.

"I'm Sarah that lived with your aunt when you were a little boy."

"You're not the one that boxed my ears for taking some jelly, are you?"

"Yes," said Sarah, smiling, "I am the one. Oh, but you were a mischievous boy, if ever there was one."

She recalled several incidents in his career as a boy, much to his amusement.

"Here we are," said Tom, as the carriage stopped. He assisted his uncle and aunt to alight, and as they reached the door, Esther came to meet them and gave them each a warm embrace. She took them upstairs to their rooms, knowing how tired they would be, not being used to travel-

ing. She gave Sarah a room next to them, so as to be near her mistress, and ordered refreshments sent to the room. Esther persuaded Aunt Amelia to lie down and rest, which she was glad to do. Esther closed the door gently, leaving them alone.

"What a lovely girl," said Sarah to her mistress after Esther had left the room.

"Is that the young lady Mr. Tom is going to marry?"

"Yes, Sarah," said Aunt Amelia, "and she is more than lovely. She is good. I can see Tom has a very happy life before him."

Downstairs the maids were criticising the new arrivals. They had caught a glimpse of them as they entered and went up stairs.

"She's from Massachusetts," said the maid who carried up the refreshments.

"How do you know?" asked the others, who were anxious to have her impression of the visitors.

"Because," she answered, "all those Massachusetts women hold their heads high like she does."

"That shows there's good blood in them," replied another maid, who had the distinction of being born in Boston, and considered herself an authority on such subjects.

The few days before the wedding were very enjoyable ones to Tom's uncle and aunt. They became as one of the family. Nothing was left undone to make their visit pleasant. Sarah had gone down stairs and become acquainted with the Pemberton maids. The cook, she found, was first cousin, once removed, as she expressed it, to her deceased husband. They became friends instantly, and the maid from Boston knew some of her friends there.

"It's not like being among strangers at all, Ma'am," she told her mistress next morning.

Aunt Amelia, having slept well during the night, felt refreshed, and was able to meet all the family at breakfast. She had up to now not been able to do so. When the meal was over she was shown the trousseau. Mrs. Pemberton was in her glory now, for Aunt Amelia was a great admirer of finery, and as Mrs. Pemberton went into detail over every

garment and gown, she expressed her pleasure in such phrases as "Oh, how lovely," or, "Isn't that beautiful?" until Mrs. Pemberton declared that Aunt Amelia was the nicest woman she ever met.

After Aunt Amelia had viewed everything to her heart's content, she in turn entertained Mrs. Pemberton with the history of the jewels she brought for Esther and other things she intended giving Tom and Esther, not forgetting to mention the oil paintings.

"You don't know how much I enjoy your society," gushed Mrs. Pemberton. "Esther and her father don't realize the amount of happiness one can get out of reviewing a wedding trousseau. They think that once is enough to look at it, but I want to see it every day."

Aunt Amelia invited Mrs. Pemberton to come to her room and she would show her the dress she was going to wear at the wedding. Mrs. Pemberton was surprised at the costly lace that was used to trim it. She knew Tom's uncle and aunt were only in comfortable circumstances, but this lace, she knew, must have cost a fortune. She inquired of Aunt Amelia how she came to be possessed of such rare and expensive lace, for Mrs. Pemberton never beat around the bush when she wanted to know anything.

"This is how I came to have such costly lace, Mrs. Pemberton," said Aunt Amelia. "My uncle, General Winthorp, was consul to Venice years ago and came into possession of this rare treasure in a peculiar manner. There is, to be exact, just eight and three-fourths yards in the piece. It belonged to a countess who was in need of money."

"A countess in need of money," repeated Mrs. Pemberton in shocked tones. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Yes," said Aunt Amelia, "there are plenty of such cases in Europe. Many of them have hardly enough to live on, my dear Mrs. Pemberton."

"But to return to my story," she said. "My uncle, the General, advanced her some money, and at her suggestion took the lace as security. She never could pay him, so let him keep it. He gave it to my mother; she in turn gave it to me, and I intend to pass it on to Esther."

"Why, it's an heirloom, by now," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes," replied Aunt Amelia, "one might call it so, after it passes into Esther's possession."

Mrs. Pemberton rose to go, but Aunt Amelia laid her hand softly on her arm, and said, "Don't go until I show you the jewels we were talking about."

She walked over to her trunk and brought out the jewel casket.

"Isn't that lovely," exclaimed Mrs. Pemberton. "Where did you get it?" she asked, as she admired the exquisite workmanship of it.

"It is beautiful, is it not?" said Aunt Amelia. "It's gold filigree set with rubies. I believe some of our ancestors had it presented to them by an East Indian prince. It has been in the family several hundred years."

"Will Esther inherit this, also?" inquired Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes, as Tom's wife it will come to her some day."

Aunt Amelia opened it and brought forth the diamond pendant. Mrs. Pemberton had a great weakness for these sparkling jewels, and Aunt Amelia told her the history of it.

"It would be lovely for Esther to wear," said Mrs. Pemberton, "but she and her father insist on pearls, so I suppose it's no use trying to coax her."

"It would not do, Mrs. Pemberton. It would only awaken sad memories to Tom. Poor boy hasn't seen it for a long time, but I have here a pearl sunburst, a simple little jewel that I would like Esther to wear. It has been worn for several generations by the Seymour brides. The pearls are darkened with age, but she can tuck it away somewhere in the lace on her corsage, not so much for show, as for the sentiment that goes with it. It will be many years, probably, before there is another Seymour bride. Perhaps never," said Aunt Amelia, sighing.

But Mrs. Pemberton cared nothing for sad memories or sentiment. She was anxious to see the rest of the treasures. As they looked over them Mrs. Pemberton listened eagerly to their history. They were mostly old fashioned, but very valuable. She enjoyed toying with them. When they finished examining them, Aunt Amelia drew out a chamois

leather bag from one corner, opened it and brought to view several unmounted diamonds and rubies.

"These," she said, "were sent as gifts from India to Tom's mother. She never had them mounted. Perhaps Esther would like to have them. I wish some time she would wear them for my sake and Tom's. I would like to place these jewels into Esther's hands myself," said Aunt Amelia.

"I will go and find her and send her to you," replied Mrs. Pemberton.

In a short time Esther came, and sitting down on an ottoman at the aunt's feet, she received the precious jewels. They meant much to her; unlike her mother, she realized how they had been laid away waiting for this opportunity.

"Esther," said Aunt Amelia, stroking her hair gently, "your love for Tom has made me very happy. I love him so dearly I could not bear to give him up, only to some one who would love him as I do."

"Aunt Amelia," said Esther, "I love Tom as I never loved, or expect to love any one else. To me he is the dearest and best of men."

"Oh, Esther, your words make me a most contented woman. I feel now that Tom is going to have some recompense for the love which was denied him in his youth by the loss of his parents. I have given him all the affection I was capable of, but a man's wife and mother hold the key to his heart; they receive the greatest share of his love. Nature seems to have reserved it for them. His faith in women is in them; they represent his highest ideals of the sex."

Esther thanked Aunt Amelia over and over again for the treasures.

"They will be just as sacred to me as they were to you," she said.

"Bless you, my dear," said the aunt, tenderly.

After a few moments of silence, she asked where her husband was.

"He is with father," said Esther, "renewing old friendships. It's doing father so much good to have his company. Tom is so busy he has not the time to spare. He is finding

out that a bridegroom does count for something, after all.

"To-morrow morning they are going to decorate the church," said Esther.

"What hour will you be married?" inquired Aunt Amelia.

"Eight o'clock, sharp,"

"Esther," she said, "I don't believe I will go out all day to-morrow; it will fatigue me too much. I want to reserve my strength for the evening."

"You and I, Aunt Amelia, will stay here together. The girls are going to help the decorator. They have some special things they wish to do themselves. Of course, mother will be there to superintend it. Dear mother," laughed Esther, "how much she has enjoyed all this excitement."

"Do you know, Esther, your mother has an immense amount of vitality. What she has accomplished since I have been here would have exhausted me. I never cared much for society," said Aunt Amelia. "It's too much of a rush and whirl all the time. One does not get time to read or think. It's like the mad rush of waters, once you enter it you are carried on in spite of yourself, and never know when you will strike a snag that will perhaps wreck your better self. Many rush through and encounter nothing. Others run into temptations. They are not strong enough to resist. I prefer a few congenial, trusted friends, and to enjoy my life in a quiet way."

"So do I," replied Esther, "but to mother society is as necessary as the air she breathes. She is like a moth flying into the candle flame; it's going to get burned, but can't resist the temptation of the bright light. It does tire her considerably, and she admits it, but still keeps in the whirl. She can't help herself."

Esther and Aunt Amelia remained together talking until lunch. After that Esther was obliged to go into consultation with Madame la Mode as to the time she wished to begin to dress, and so forth. Madame herself intended to superintend the toilet, as much of her reputation depended on the appearance of her customers, especially brides, whose dressing she always insisted should be under her super-

vision. It was not often she had such an attractive bride as Miss Pemberton, and she intended to put forth all her best efforts to make her the marvel of loveliness to all eyes. She knew all the first families would be there, and it might mean extra patronage to her business.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WEDDING.

Tom came to spend the evening with Esther and to talk over some items with Mr. Pemberton. As he left he folded Esther in his arms for the last time.

"Dear, until I call you wife," he said.

How Tom loved to dwell on that sacred word. To him it meant a haven of rest, a home, someone that was all his.

"You will meet me next, Esther, at the altar, where I hope God's blessing will be shed on our union. I am impatient to call you my own, mine forever," he said as he bade her good night.

Mrs. Pemberton was the first member of the family up in the morning. She could not rest, she said; she had talked over the plans for the church decorations with the florist. He was to be there at 9 a. m., and it was yet only 7 a. m.

After breakfast, which was at eight, one hour earlier than usual, on account of the decorator's coming; they wished to get at work by 9 a. m., at the least, at both church and house.

Mrs. Pemberton ordered the carriage, intending to go to the church, a long ring at the door arrested her attention, and soon the maid announced the arrival of the first present. It was taken into the room set aside for this purpose, opened and admired by the family.

Mrs. Pemberton was anxious to have the presents viewed by the guests, but Esther and Aunt Amelia argued her out of it. The former thought it was an objectionable practice. It savors too much of vulgarity.

"Mother," she said, "it is not right to lay them out for exhibition; it arouses feelings of envy and jealousy."

"If the guests do not see them, they are spared those sins," said Aunt Amelia, virtuously.

It was a sore trial to Mrs. Pemberton to have all those lovely treasures shut up under lock and key, when, as she said, she knew everyone was just dying to see them. She was in a terrible dilemma, too. The presents kept arriving in astonishing numbers. She wished to be there to see them unpacked. Then, on the other hand, the church decorations were being put in place and she wanted to be there. It was a physical impossibility to be in both places at once, so she was obliged to compromise by keeping the carriage continually driving between the church and the house. At 2 p. m. the decorations were finished, and the church and house presented a beautiful appearance. It was decided that none of the family were now to be visible to any one. They all wished to rest. But Mrs. Pemberton insisted on telling Esther about the church.

"It looks lovely, Esther. The ceiling and walls are all festooned with trailing vines and roses, and yards and yards of white satin ribbon tied in enormous bows at each seat, with lilies of the valley tucked in between them. The altar is a mass of roses and ferns, and a lovely canopy of roses and ferns for you and Tom to stand under while you are being married; and the bridesmaids have baskets of rose leaves, all ready for the children to strew before you."

And so Mrs. Pemberton went on telling how the vestibule of the church was decorated until Esther laughed outright at her mother's rapid description of everything.

"Don't you think the house looks nice, too, mother?" asked Esther, who was watching the maid picking up the broken flowers and pieces of greenery that had fallen on the floor. But Mrs. Pemberton took no notice of the interruption.

"I stood under the canopy," she continued, "to see how it felt; and you know that stained glass window with the angel on it at the side of the altar, well it just looks at you

as if it was beckoning you into paradise. You will think so, too, Esther, when you see it."

"Well, mother, I think you are getting your metaphors mixed a little. That sounds like a funeral. I don't wish to be beckoned into anything but an earthly paradise just yet. This world looks too bright to me to want to leave it."

"That wasn't the way I meant, Esther. But you notice the angel yourself and see what you think of it."

Eventually Mrs. Pemberton subsided enough to admire the home decorations and went into rhapsodies over them.

After a light lunch they all went to their rooms to recuperate before evening. About five o'clock one of the maids knocked timidly on Esther's door. When it was opened she informed her that her mother had countermanded her order as to the dinner and wanted to know what she would do.

"Wait, Hannah, and I will go down with you. Where is mother?"

"In the dining room, miss."

"Oh, Esther, I'm so glad you came. Hannah says you told her not to serve the dinner here to-night, but to prepare a collation in the breakfast room to-night."

"I did, mother. None of us will care for a regular dinner, and the caterer wants the dining room to arrange the tables for the bridal party. The maids have been on their feet all day, mother, and are tired. I don't see the necessity of serving a long course dinner. The guests will be served at 10 p. m."

"Just as you say, Esther, but you know I like a good dinner," said Mrs. Pemberton, with the air of a martyr.

"You will have plenty, mother dear, only it will be plainly served. Poor Hannah is worn out; she has had to sit in the hall all day answering the door and receiving presents. Everyone has been so busy. There was no one even to relieve her, to give her a chance to eat her lunch. I had to have it sent to her."

"I did not know that, Esther."

"Hannah, I am very sorry," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"It did not matter, ma'am," said the tired Hannah.

"We don't have a wedding every day," said Mrs. Pemberton, "and you are glad, are you not?" she said as she turned to Hannah.

"Ma'am, I would do anything for Miss Esther."

"Thank you, Hannah," said the latter. "Now go and rest," she said to the maid, "and I will get Mamie to attend to your duties."

The grateful Hannah was glad of the opportunity, as she had been on her feet since daylight.

Esther returned to her room. She had persuaded her mother to go and rest, but there was no rest for Mrs. Pemberton. She was more excited than a child going to its first party. The maid had everything in readiness for her, when it would be time to dress, and urged her in vain to lie down. It was only when she told her mistress how tired out she would look if she did not that she threw herself on the lounge to rest.

At six o'clock the bell rang for the evening meal. Esther wanted to take some refreshment in her room, as she was not hungry, she said; but her father coaxed her to come at least to the table and sit with them. "It will be your last meal with us for some time," he said, "so don't deny us the pleasure of your presence."

She came down to dinner and despite Mrs. Pemberton's uneasiness over the loss of their usually long course dinner, they all managed to enjoy an excellent meal and went immediately after it to their rooms.

Madame la Mode had already arrived with her assistants, for Esther had begged her to bring an extra one to attend to the dressing of her mother. "I won't be able to be running to her room half a dozen times to fix some little trifle that needs attention." The hair dressers were momentarily expected. "I am afraid we are going to be rushed to death," said Mrs. Pemberton as she ran here and there hunting for some article that the maid had already laid out. "I hate to dress right after dinner; one feels so uncomfortable."

Hannah kept guard over Esther and allowed no one to enter her room but those already mentioned. Mrs. Pem-

berton wrung her hands in despair at the outrage, as she called it.

"I never heard of such a thing," she said petulantly, "of not allowing a mother to see her daughter dressing for her wedding."

"Madame requested me to tell you that when the bride is dressed you shall be the first to see her," said Hannah.

This served in a measure to soothe her wounded feelings. She followed the assistant who had come to help her into the room, who managed to get her so interested in her toilet that she forgot everything else.

The hair dresser arrived and was sent to Mrs. Pember-ton's room first, as Esther was not quite ready for his services. He bowed pleasantly to them and began to open up his boxes. Aunt Amelia, who was in the room, was astonished at the paraphernalia he brought with him. She was unused to modern society's needs and could not retain her expression of surprise as he opened boxes of puffs and switches, pins, cologne, waving irons, bottles of all sorts, quite foreign to her ideas of hair dressing. Such things were unheard of in her girlhood days. She recalled that in the days when she was a bride every one seemed to have luxuriant hair. Poor Aunt Amelia had lived in days when people looked at such things as sinful, and did not hide their shortcomings, but bravely bore them unflinchingly. If they had the misfortune to have scanty locks, no one looked askance at them in consequence. If their teeth were gone, they would have died before they put false ones in their place.

"There's nothing false about Esther," thought Aunt Amelia, as she watched the hair dresser progress with his work. "Her sunny golden hair is all her own."

Aunt Amelia was not an old lady as age counts in these progressive days; but she had a quiet dignity about her that made her appear older than she was. She scorned the use of cosmetics of any description, and wore her silvered hair plainly dressed. No amount of persuasion could bring her to wear it any other way. She wore it parted in the middle when she was married and never changed it with the

various styles that had come and gone since then. She was one of those fast disappearing old ladies that look as if they had stepped out of some old oil painting. She was stately and commanded admiration wherever she went.

When Mrs. Pemberton left the Monsieur's professional hands she was completely transformed. Even Aunt Amelia, who had watched the process with interest, could not withhold a glance of admiration as she looked at her. Aunt Amelia's toilet had been finished long before the others had begun theirs. Sarah had put deft touches here and there, and even persuaded her mistress to wear some jewels, so that Aunt Amelia looked really distinguished when she was dressed, notwithstanding her absolute refusal to her husband's entreaties that she let Sarah just put a suspicion of a wave in her front hair. Like most men, he admired prettily dressed hair, but Aunt Amelia never would resort to any means to add to her looks in the shape of curling irons or such things.

"If the good Lord intended me to have it that way, he would have done so," she said. Yet she admired it in others.

The hair dresser had now retired and was busily engaged with Esther's tresses. He handled them lovingly as he arranged them. "Ah, how much better is ze nature," he said, as he coiled it up and placed it in position. Every hair is in its own place and lies gracefully on the head. He drew back to admire the effect, moved a pin here and there, asked Madame's opinion, and then informed Esther it was finished. He withdrew, politely bowing to his patron. Madame put the finishing touches to the toilet, and before long sent the maid with a message to Mrs. Pemberton that she could now see the bride. Esther was surprised at her mother's appearance when she came into the room.

"Why, mother," she said, "how lovely you look!" But Mrs. Pemberton was too taken up with Esther's gown to hear her.

"Isn't she a radiant vision," said Madame, alluding to Esther, who certainly did look angelic. "I never dressed a handsomer bride," she said with genuine satisfaction.

"If she only had some diamonds now," said Mrs. Pemberton, who was dazzling herself with her favorite jewels. "But she will wear nothing but those pearls."

"Mrs. Pemberton, your daughter has chosen wisely," answered Madame. "Those pearls are perfectly exquisite."

Aunt Amelia, who had followed Mrs. Pemberton to the room to see the bride too, was delighted with Esther's loveliness. As she came closer to admire the pearls Esther lifted up the lace bertha and showed her the pearl sunburst tucked in underneath it. "Right over my heart," she said in a whisper. Aunt Amelia smiled lovingly at her, and Esther knew it was an enduring love like Tom's.

Madame now spread out the train of Esther's dress, and walked around her solemnly to see if everything about the dress was correct. The bridesmaids were all warned to be in waiting at the church door exactly on time, so that there would be no delay. Everything was in readiness now and the carriages waiting. The bell rang.

"Who can that be?" said Mrs. Pemberton, nervously.

"Just some messenger probably," said Esther. "But, no, mother," she said, I hear voices. Why it's Mabel."

"Oh, Esther!" she said, breathlessly, "I could not resist the temptation of coming here first, before we went to the church. I wanted so bad to see you before the public did."

Madame would allow no kissing, as she saw Esther on the point of going forward to greet Mabel. "I cannot permit the bride to embrace you," said she. "It will disarrange her gown." So they laughably kissed the tips of their fingers to one another. After a few hurried compliments Mabel ran down stairs again to Fred, who was waiting in the carriage for her. "She looks lovely, Fred," she said as she settled herself in the carriage.

The bride followed and was carefully placed in her seat by the Madame, who took her seat beside her. She was going as far as the church door to arrange the train before Esther went up the aisle. She gazed serenely at the young bride, and thought she had never seen a lovelier face.

As soon as they arrived at the church and Esther was in the vestibule ready to enter, the organ pealed forth the

wedding march. Tom and his best man were already in their places as Esther walked slowly up the aisle on the arm of her father. All eyes were upon her. She was followed by the matron of honor and the bridesmaids. The sweet little flower girls had walked on ahead of her and strewed roses in her path. Mrs. Pemberton was already in her seat, and proud of the admiration her daughter's beauty was causing; so much so that she became so absorbed in the occupation of it that she forgot to look at the angel on the side of the altar, a thing she declared she would do as soon as she took her seat.

Esther took her place under the canopy in front of the altar, her father having relinquished her into Tom's keeping. They made a handsome couple as they knelt in prayer before the vows were taken. As they rose the bishop, assisted by the rector, pronounced the solemn words that made them man and wife, while the organist played in subdued tones. When the service was completed the choir burst into a happy chorus as the bride went down the aisle on the arm of her husband. There was the usual rush to see the bride as she entered the carriage. They were driven rapidly to the Pemberton mansion, where they graciously received the congratulations of their multitude of friends.

The musicians were playing sweet strains of music in a rose-embowered corner, while the guests mingled together in animated conversation.

Mrs. Pemberton was complimented on all sides by her friends on her beautiful daughter, while Mr. Pemberton spoke with pardonable pride about his new son-in-law. Aunt Amelia was welcomed warmly by everyone, the Winthrops being of a distinguished Boston family, the name being sufficient to give any member of it entrée into the most exclusive circles. She was correspondingly happy; so was her husband as he viewed the throng that had come to do honor to Tom and Esther.

At ten o'clock the bridal party took their seats at a most *recherché* supper, elegantly served. The guests were grouped in tables around them. The hum of voices and sound of laughter was happy music to the ears. Never was

a bride more loved than Esther. She was loved by rich and poor, as was shown by her presents, which came from the humblest to the wealthiest. She was now the centre of a scene of enchantment. The handsome costumes, beautiful decorations, music, all seemed to lend themselves to form a perfect fairyland of which Esther was the lovely princess, the admired of the admirers. Mr. Pemberton and his wife were proud of this evening. They couldn't contain themselves with joy. Here was the culmination of their wishes—Esther and Tom—son and daughter. After Esther had made her choice, and they had become reconciled to it, the way was smooth. They could hardly realize now that they ever had opposed Tom. It seemed like a dream.

"Why, look at Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton!" said a guest. "You both look happy enough for bride and groom." They laughed at this sally and rose to speak to some late comers.

As soon as expedient, Esther slipped away from the guests and donned her travelling suit. A pretty surprise awaited her; as she came down stairs a shower of rose leaves fell on her, and another shower was thrown over her as she rushed to the carriage with Tom, laughing merrily as the dainty leaves enveloped her. As the carriage drove off all kinds of good wishes were extended to them. The bridesmaids returned to the house, having thoroughly enjoyed the fun. The music was resumed and the guests chatted on gaily; many, having come from a distance, were glad of this opportunity to meet their friends. Mabel came in for her share of admiration. She was a new satellite and many revolved around her and enjoyed her sparkling conversation, much to Mrs. Pemberton's delight. She loved to introduce a new face to her friends. It was late when the last guest departed. The lights were turned out and the family retired.

They all met again at the breakfast table next morning and discussed the wedding. Tom's uncle was in the best of humors. He was proud of the wife Tom had chosen. Aunt Amelia was pleased also at the way she had been received by the guests. But Mrs. Pemberton felt that she

was the one that received most of the attention as mother of the bride.

"Why, Stanley," she said, "it was glorious to hear the lovely compliments that were paid to me as Esther's mother. Everyone, of course, knew where she inherited her beauty from; the resemblance between us is so apparent," she said innocently.

"Yes," said her husband, "I'll admit I am no beauty."

"Oh, Stanley! don't say that, my dear. You were regarded as one of the handsomest young men in our town."

"Now, Eva," said her husband, with mock severity, "why did you not tell me that years ago. It was a shame to keep me all this time in ignorance of such an astounding fact," laughed Mr. Pemberton.

After breakfast they went, at Mrs. Pemberton's suggestion, to look at the presents. "You know they all came in at once, and I was so busy I had not time to half admire them." So she led the way to the room where they had been placed for safety.

She gushed and went into raptures over everything, each article, in her estimation, being a little choicer than the other which she had looked at. At last she came to an unopened package. "What do you suppose is in here?" she said, "wrapped up like that?" She picked it up, and after scrutinizing it closely said, "Oh, here is the address of the sender." She looked at it in amazement.

"I never heard of such impertinence in all my life!" she said angrily.

"What's the matter, Eva?" asked her husband.

"Matter enough! Read that!"

Mr. Pemberton put on his glasses and read slowly the inscription, "To Miss Pemberton from the ladies of Finigan's Lane." It had been carefully packed and addressed by Mr. Burgomeister. Mrs. Mulligan and Mrs. Israel had left their presents in the care of his wife to be sent with hers to the bride before they went away.

"I don't see anything in that to get angry about, Eva. These good women just idolize Esther, and wanted to send her some gift. Probably they saved and sacrificed many a

little necessity to buy these. Let us open the box and see what's in it," he said.

Mr. Pemberton called for a hammer; for on taking off the wrappings they found inside a wooden box with the cover nailed tightly on. On opening it the first thing they found was Mrs. Mulligan's piece of Limerick lace, which Mrs. Pemberton was forced to admire, in spite of her anger.

"Well," she said as she looked at it again, "it's not so bad for Maggie to remember Esther, but that Israel woman! and what is that other awful name?" she said, as her husband lifted out the fruit cake, with the donor's name on it.

"Now, Eva, don't be ridiculous. These good-hearted women meant well, and Esther, I know, will value their kindness. Here's another package," he said, as he opened Mrs. Israel's piece of spatchel work. Mrs. Pemberton took it in her hand gingerly, and on examining it found it was made of an extra fine piece of linen, and her interest increased in it when she noticed how neatly it was worked.

"Maybe Esther won't mind it," she said. "She is a peculiar girl. But I certainly would not want that class of people to be sending me presents."

"There's not the slightest danger of their doing so, Eva. You have never worried yourself about their needs, and Esther has," said Mr. Pemberton testily. He was provoked at his wife's lack of appreciation of their thoughtfulness. She called Hannah to take the cake away. "It will only bring flies," she said; but Mr. Pemberton intercepted Hannah and told her to put it carefully away, as it was a gift to Miss Esther, and she should be the one to decide its destination.

Aunt Amelia in the meantime had been busily engaged in looking over Jamie's present. It was really a beautiful gift; he had saved all he could spare for months to buy it.

"I never saw a finer collection of engravings," she said to her husband. Mr. Pemberton crossed the room at their request to look at them.

"Come, Eva," he said, addressing his wife, "and see what Maggie's boy sent Esther. An artist could not have conceived a more delicate conception of a gift."

Mrs. Pemberton paid little attention to it; only enough to remark she would like to know where a newsboy could get money enough to buy such rare works of art.

"You forget, Eva, he has a book store now, and is making money," said Mr. Pemberton. But she heard nothing; she was walking out of the room in disgust. "Poor Eva!" remarked Mr. Pemberton. "She is a great stickler for class distinction," he said, apologizing for her behavior.

"She makes a great mistake," said Aunt Amelia, "in thinking that because a person is poor and humbly born, he or she cannot appreciate the finer things in life. I have seen many a boy and girl raised in poor surroundings that made noble men and refined women. And I have seen those that were raised in aristocratic homes develop into brutal men and coarse women. These strange things do happen every day. So, as I say, it's a great mistake to despise anyone whose only fault is poverty; for that is liable to overtake any of us at any time. Poverty is not a crime but simply a misfortune."

Here they were interrupted by the maid announcing Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild. Mrs. Pemberton went forward to meet her and brought her to see the presents, while Fred and Mr. Pemberton went into the library to visit together. She poured out her grievances to Mabel and told of the audacity of those women. Mabel smoothed her troubles away for her by telling her how pleased Esther would be when she heard of it.

"And, Mrs. Pemberton," she said, "I know you are mistaken in their motives. Why, Mrs. Mulligan is one of the best hearted women I ever met. Think of her bringing Mrs. Israel and her boy to New York, and taking care of them. It gives her so much extra work, too; but she says that if she left them behind they would have no one to care for them. Mrs. Israel is no help to her. She has not the strength to do anything. Fred is going to send her to a sanitarium for treatment. He thinks she can be cured; at least that is the doctor's opinion."

"Does he believe in encouraging such people?" said Mrs. Pemberton in amazement.

"You don't understand it, my dear Mrs. Pemberton," replied Mabel. "It's humanity that appeals to him; he cares nothing, neither do I for that matter, about class distinction."

"Of course, I am not used to that sort of thing," said Mrs. Pemberton, sneeringly, "and, as you say, Mabel, don't understand it."

"Neither am I, Mrs. Pemberton, but I can't shut my eyes and ears to distress!"

"You are just as bad as Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton. "I had hoped you would be different, but now that I think of it, Fred was always picking up some newsboy or boot-black and those sort of people."

"Just to help them, Mrs. Pemberton," intercepted Mabel, "not for companionship. You don't know how much they think of him, too. I told him the other day that I would be getting jealous. Every time we go to the village some child or other is always running up to the carriage to give him a flower; they all seem to know how much he loves them."

"Well, Mabel," said Mrs. Pemberton, "I never could bear those street urchins near me. They look so dirty."

"Not always, Mrs. Pemberton," replied Mabel.

"What's all this confab about?" said Fred, coming into the room, but Mabel took him by the arm and led him off to see the presents, as she did not wish to argue any more with Mrs. Pemberton, who could not understand Fred's philanthropic ideas any more than she could understand the earth revolving on its own axis.

Mrs. Pemberton was very disappointed when she found that Mabel and Fred were going back home that afternoon. She expected to have at least a week's visit from them.

Aunt Amelia and her husband were packing, preparatory to returning to their home.

Mrs. Pemberton was in despair; she loved excitement. And now that she was going to be left alone, it grieved her. She tried to persuade Aunt Amelia to remain a week more at least. "I wish I could, Mrs. Pemberton," she replied, "but I wish to get home, as Esther and Tom promised me they would pay me a visit on their way home. I have so

much I want to show Esther. She is naturally interested in Tom's parents, and I want to tell her more about them. She is a dear girl, Mrs. Pemberton, and I want her to be a daughter to me. Tom has promised to bring her to visit me at least twice a year."

"Oh, dear," said Mrs. Pemberton, "then I'll be left alone with Stanley, and he will be wanting to read to me all the latest political moves as he calls them. He knows I don't understand such nonsense, but he will read it to me. He says everyone should keep posted on such things."

At luncheon Mabel entertained Mrs. Pemberton with an account of the improvements they were making on their grounds. "We have two new greenhouses, one for orchids alone. Fred just received some beautiful specimens from South Africa before we left, and we are both anxious to get back to examine them; one is the *Espiritu Sancto*, a very rare one. You must come and visit us again. The flowers look beautiful now. We will take better care of you next time," said Mabel, laughing.

"Have you had any more card parties, Mabel?" asked Mrs. Pemberton eagerly.

"None since you left," she replied.

"I don't know how you can stand such a dull life, Mabel, and you are so young."

"I don't find it dull, Mrs. Pemberton. The days are too short for me; they are gone before I realize it. I have my ferneries to attend to. I spend days at a time with them. I love to watch the graceful fronds unfold. There are no two of my ferns alike. Fred is always sending off for more. I tell him pretty soon we will have the whole place covered with greenhouses."

"Don't either of you do anything but fuss with the flowers?" asked Mrs. Pemberton, who could not understand a young and attractive couple like Mabel and Fred burying themselves, as she called it, instead of entertaining and leading society.

"Of course I do," said Mabel. "My music takes up a great deal of my time, and then I have my church work."

"Your church work! Mabel. Are you like Esther, always going to guild and aid society meetings? Oh, Mabel," she said, "I am disappointed in you!"

"Why, Mrs. Pemberton? I hope I have not hurt your feelings in any way," said Mabel as she saw something was amiss with her hostess.

"No, Mabel, but I thought you were a different girl altogether."

"In what way, Mrs. Pemberton?" asked Mabel.

"You could be a society belle, if you did not waste your time on such things," said Mrs. Pemberton. "There are plenty of homely and ugly girls to do those things without your bothering about them."

"But suppose I like doing it, Mrs. Pemberton, and feel it a duty."

"I can't understand it, Mabel; a young matron like you with good looks and plenty of money enjoying such things, when you could be a leader of society, with the advantages you have, and have all the men at your feet. Just the thing Aunt Maud had said."

"Oh, Mrs. Pemberton," said Mabel, in alarm, "such a life would be obnoxious to me. I value my character above anything else I possess."

"It would not hurt your character a particle, Mabel. Of course, you might be misunderstood, but that would be nothing."

"I prefer my country home and my good husband beyond anything else. To me they are priceless."

"Well, Mabel, of course if you feel that way about it, I suppose it's all right. But you could have society at your feet if you wished it."

"But I don't wish it, Mrs. Pemberton," said Mabel, laughing at her anxiety over her future. "Fred and home represent my world, and he is the only one I want to see at my feet."

"That's Esther all over," smiled Mrs. Pemberton, as Fred came to remind Mabel that it was near train time. Mabel wished them all good-bye, and she and Fred went to the train.

"What a strange woman Mrs. Pemberton is!" she remarked to Fred as they were going to the station.

"Yes," he replied, "I have ceased to wonder at her vagaries long ago. She is just like all shallow minded people, has nothing to fall back on when the reaction comes."

Aunt Amelia and her husband were the next to take their leave. Mrs. Pemberton hated to see them go. It would leave her without a guest, but Aunt Amelia insisted on being at home in time to meet Esther and Tom on their return. As she bade Mrs. Pemberton farewell the latter wept and begged her to come and visit them soon again. "I would be glad to," she replied. "Our visit has been an especially enjoyable one. We seldom leave home, but will certainly visit you again some time in the future."

As they drove off Mrs. Pemberton turned to her husband and said, "I am all alone now."

"You've got me yet, Eva," he said, laughing.

"Yes, Stanley, and I could enjoy being with you, if you did not ask me so many foolish questions. I hate the dry subjects you like to talk about."

"Well, Eva, I'll try to be more companionable to you. But I do like to read and have some one to discuss with what I have read."

"Now, Stanley, promise me you will put that all aside until Tom and Esther get back. They like it, I don't."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. AND MRS. PEMBERTON LEFT ALONE.

He laid away his books and devoted his time to his wife. First she wanted to go driving. When the carriage was ordered, she changed her mind and concluded she would go calling on some of her intimate friends instead and find out what they thought of the wedding.

"Where will we go first?" inquired Mr. Pemberton.

"Let us go and see Mrs. Gaye," answered his wife. "She always knows the latest news."

The coachman was ordered to drive there.

Mrs. Gaye was delighted to see dear Mrs. Pemberton, and embraced her warmly. After they were comfortably seated and a few commonplace remarks were made, Mrs. Gaye invited Mrs. Pemberton to come upstairs and see her latest Paris gown.

"You stay there, Stanley," said his wife. "We will be back directly."

Mr. Pemberton sat and sat until he was tired, but no Mrs. Pemberton came. He walked around the drawing room, and admired some etchings that were hanging on the wall and then sat down again. Still no Mrs. Pemberton. After an hour had passed he was getting very impatient, so he made another tour of investigation. He could find nothing to interest him anywhere in the room.

"What can be keeping them?" he thought. He opened the door quietly and tip-toed across the hall, in the hopes of finding the library, where he knew he could find some book that would help him to pass away the time. But after opening several doors, he gave it up. He could find no trace of a library. He returned to the drawing room and again took his seat to await his wife's coming. "She cannot possibly be much longer," he thought. He was getting so uneasy that he could not keep still a minute. "Eva wonders why I am not more companionable. This sort of thing is an aggravation; the idea of keeping a man here——" And he pulled out his watch to see the time; two hours exactly, with nothing in the world to amuse him. "If she was a child, I could inflict some punishment on her for it; but being my wife, I must bear it."

It was getting late now and the rooms were getting dark. "Maybe she intends to stay upstairs all night," he said, muttering to himself. He walked over to the lounge and was preparing to lie down. He was tired out by now. "I know I am breaking the one hundred and one rules that go to make up the etiquette of calling, but, by Jupiter, I can't stand this thing any longer," he said as he stretched himself

out on the lounge. In spite of all his efforts to keep awake, he eventually succumbed and slept soundly, until awakened by his wife, who, in the meantime, had, after admiring Mrs. Gaye's latest creation from Paris, gone down town with her to the milliner's to give her opinion on a hat that Mrs. Gaye had ordered to go with her gown.

On leaving the millinery store they met some friends, who invited them to a nearby café to have a cup of chocolate. After they had spent some time there discussing a coming social event, they got up to go home, Mrs. Pemberton just remembering her husband whom she had left in Mrs. Gaye's drawing room. "Poor Stanley," she said to her friend as she looked at her watch, "he will be out of patience with me; we have been gone three hours."

They hurried home and as Mrs. Pemberton entered the drawing room she was shocked to see her husband asleep on Mrs. Gaye's lounge. She went over to him and shook him vigorously. "Stanley, aren't you ashamed of yourself lying down like that in Mrs. Gaye's drawing room?" He sat up, hardly realizing that he was not at home.

"Why, Eva," he said, sleepily, "why did you wake me up?"

"You're not at home, Stanley. You're at Mrs. Gaye's."

"Yes," he said, as it dawned on him where he was. "And pray, why have you kept me prisoner here all this time? I never in my life put in such an afternoon."

Mrs. Gaye laughed merrily at him, but he was in no humor to be laughed at.

"It may be very amusing to you, Mrs. Gaye, to be shut up in a drawing room for three hours, and to keep an unfortunate coachman up on his box for the same length of time, to say nothing about the poor horses," he said angrily.

"Oh, Stanley, don't be so cross," said his wife. "I'll never take you visiting with me again."

"God forbid that I should ever be led into such a trap again by you," he said savagely.

Mrs. Gaye was now alarmed at his wrath. She was afraid he might talk about it before her husband.

"He is such a crank," she whispered to Mrs. Pemberton,

"about keeping horses waiting for hours before a house. When I go to a reception, he always keeps nagging at me about it, but one gets so interested when once you are inside that you forget everything else."

"Oh, Mrs. Gaye," said Mrs. Pemberton, "I will be so glad when Esther returns. She can amuse her father then and discuss those awful subjects with him. I can't."

"If he scolds you much, dear, let me know," said Mrs. Gaye as she kissed her good-bye.

As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton entered the carriage he emptied the vials of his wrath on her.

"Oh, Stanley, I'm so sorry. I wish we had taken you down town with us. The chocolate was delicious; they serve such lovely cream at the chic café."

"I don't care what they serve," he replied fiercely. "You'll never serve me again like that. You never saw Esther guilty of such a thing. Do you suppose she would have kept the coachman sitting rigidly for three hours. No; she has too much humanity about her," he said viciously. "And to leave me shut up in that room like that! Such things are beyond human endurance, Eva!"

Mrs. Pemberton was greatly frightened at his vehemence.

"I tried to find the library, but could not," said her irate husband. "Probably it's turned into a receptacle for fashion plates."

"It's no use talking that way, Stanley. Mrs. Gaye was obliged to have it removed to the end of the hall upstairs, because Mr. Gaye objected to her serving tea there, just because some jelly happened to get on the cover of some rare manuscripts he got from Egypt or some other heathen country. Why will husbands be so disagreeable?" she said, as the tears rolled down her cheeks. Mr. Pemberton reached over and took her hand.

"Forgive me, Eva, for speaking so harshly to you, but you do exasperate me beyond endurance, and most of it, my dear, is caused by thoughtlessness. I never would have left you anywhere and forgotten you for three hours."

"I know you wouldn't, Stanley," she said penitently.

By this time they had reached home, and found dinner

waiting for them. After dinner, peace being restored, Mr. Pemberton suggested that they go to the theatre; which they did. Mrs. Pemberton enjoyed it immensely, although she did get quite excited over the hero who almost eloped with the wrong girl by mistake, much to her disgust. "I don't see how he could have made such a mistake. They don't look a bit alike." Mr. Pemberton laughed at her anxiety over their love affairs.

Next morning's mail brought a letter from Esther and Tom. They were delighted with their new home and were still exploring it, they said. "We expect to visit Mabel and Aunt Amelia before we return. So you need not look for us for some time yet."

"Oh, dear," said Mr. Pemberton as he laid the letter down, "what an eternity!"

"What are you talking about eternity for? You're not going to get sick again, are you?"

"No, Eva. Don't alarm yourself. I was just thinking how long it would be before Esther was back to us again."

"It will be fully three weeks. It is an awfully long time, isn't it, Stanley?"

"Yes, indeed, Eva. Esther has become part of myself. I can hardly stand her being away from me."

"That's the way with me, Stanley. I have to order the meals and attend to the household duties now. I don't know what I would do without Hannah. She takes the responsibility off my shoulders and does everything," said Mrs. Pemberton, contradicting herself.

Mr. Pemberton had hard work to keep his wife amused. She did not take up any of the different occupations indulged in by most women, but wanted to go, go, all the time. Her husband was not used to running about as she was, and it fatigued and wearied him, this incessant going from one place to another. He longed to get back to his beloved books again, but knew it was useless to attempt it until Esther's return. He would hardly get a chapter read before she would be in the library to tell him about some trifling thing that had gone wrong with the maids or her dress or something or another that he could not straighten out for

her. But he was determined to bear it if possible until Esther's return. Then he would be relieved of the anxiety and worry of it all. "What would have become of me," he thought, "if I had not begged of Esther and Tom to make their home with us? I verily believe I would have ended up in a lunatic asylum."

The days were tediously passed by him in his wife's company. Her pursuits were so opposite to his; but he submitted to her whims as gracefully as he could. Once in a while, though, he would lose patience with her over some silly frivolity she had indulged in, but the next instant he would regret his hasty words and ask her pardon. She was like a child; after she had shed her tears, she would smile again and forget what caused them. Her husband understood her and tried to avoid subjects she disliked. It was very hard on him, but he had learned patience since Esther was gone.

He could not understand how she managed to get along with her mother so peaceably. They never had any clashes or wordy wars. Yet try as he would to avoid such things, he could not please his wife ten minutes at a time. "Esther must have some charm over her, I think. I never could please or satisfy her." But he did not know the secret of Esther's success in the management of her mother was in letting her have her own way to all appearances, and yet do things to suit herself independent of her mother's irresolute ways.

Mrs. Gaye returned Mrs. Pemberton's call in a few days. She was anxious to know if Mr. Pemberton had recovered his good humor.

Mrs. Pemberton was overjoyed to see her. "Dear Mrs. Gaye," she said in ecstasies, "how good of you to come. I am just bored to death."

"I knew you would be, dear. How is Mr. Pemberton? Has he got over his ill temper yet?"

"Oh, yes; he was just lovely that night after dinner. He was real sorry he spoke so cross to me."

"I thought he was just horrid," said Mrs. Gaye. "In fact, I never knew he could be so hateful."

Mrs. Pemberton did not encourage her to slander her husband; for, with all her faults and foolishness, she was a loyal wife and never allowed any one to say a word against her husband.

"When is your daughter coming home?" asked Mrs. Gaye, seeing that she was not going to get any satisfaction out of Mrs. Pemberton by abusing her husband.

"In about three weeks."

"Why, Mrs. Pemberton, how can you stand being alone with your husband all that time? It would kill me. Mr. Gaye goes his way and I go mine. Why don't you do that way, Mrs. Pemberton?"

"Because I don't wish to," she replied, showing more spirit than Mrs. Gaye ever dreamed she possessed.

"I think, Mrs. Pemberton, I'll go home. You seem bent on being disagreeable this afternoon."

"Why, Mrs. Gaye, what have I done to offend you?"

"Nothing special," she answered airily. "But don't let us quarrel. I want you to come down town with me. Oh, here comes your husband," she said, as she heard his footsteps. "I do hope he has not been counting the time my horse has been standing in front of your house."

But Mr. Pemberton had no idea that Mrs. Gaye was even in the house.

"Eva," he called.

"Yes, Stanley; I am here with Mrs. Gaye."

He came into the room and shook hands with his wife's guest and entered into the conversation. After a few minutes his wife asked him what he wanted her for.

"I thought perhaps you would like a drive," he replied. "I know you feel lonely without Esther." He was only echoing his own feelings when he made this remark.

"Mrs. Gaye was just asking me to come down town with her."

"Then go by all means, Eva. I know you will enjoy that better."

After a few more words he excused himself, left the room and returned to the library, where he remained reading

until dinner was announced. During the meal his wife entertained him with the various sights she had seen, and all the stores they had visited. He listened to her for some time, and then asked her seriously if the fashions had changed since yesterday.

"Now, Stanley, you are just making fun of me. I'll not tell you a word more. I was going to tell you about Mrs. Gaye's hat, but I suppose you don't want to hear about it."

"No, I do not; wasn't that the cause of my imprisonment in her drawing room for three hours?"

"No, indeed, Stanley, my forgetfulness was the cause of it. The hat is a perfect dream. I wish I had one like it."

"Well, why don't you get one, Eva."

"You know what Esther is, Stanley. She would say it was too juvenile for me. I don't see why I could not wear that style as well as Mrs. Gaye."

"Wait until Esther comes home," he suggested, "and get her to help you to choose one," he said soothingly.

"She won't," she answered tearfully.

"Oh, yes, she will."

"Not the kind I want, Stanley."

"Well, we'll see, Eva," he said as he left the dining room.

Mrs. Pemberton passed the rest of the evening admiring some trifles she had purchased when she was in town, giving her husband plenty of time to enjoy his book.

The time passed away quickly. At last the day came for Esther and Tom's home coming. Great were the preparations to receive them. The interest spread from the friends down to the maids in the household. All were anxious to see Esther's sunny face again. They were glad to think she would be once more among them. She always had been a great favorite, and they missed her and longed for her return. Tom also had their good wishes; everyone that met him liked him.

"We must have a grand reception," Mrs. Pemberton said when it came near time for them to return.

But Mr. Pemberton said, "No, Eva; let us have them to ourselves. There will be plenty of time for social doings

if Esther wishes it. Remember she is a child no longer, and in her position as Tom's wife, she has a right to decide her own course."

"Oh dear, Stanley, I have to be sent to the rear, I suppose, and to be converted into a back number, like those dowagers we read about."

"No, my dear. What I meant was this. You must not be making plans for her life any more than you would for Mrs. Gaye's."

"But, Esther is my daughter."

"Yes, Eva, but listen to me. She is Tom's wife now. When you married me your mother did not regulate our lives for us. We established our home and did things to suit ourselves. You were still her daughter and were dutiful to her too. Esther will be the same as a matron. She will be just as near to us as she was as a daughter. Of that I am certain. Hers is not the nature to change."

Mr. Pemberton was extremely happy now. He would have Tom and Esther for companions. "Both have bright minds," he thought. "I can read to my heart's content and have some one always to reason with. I like to do that; it brings out the points, for what one does not observe the other one does. Then, too, I like some one else's opinion on a book besides my own."

Mr. Pemberton had never taken any interest in the house, other than to pay the bills. He left all such things to his wife and Esther. But now he found himself actually wanting to attend to the details. He went so far as to send for the cook and requested her to prepare a sumptuous dinner in their honor.

"Make it a holiday event," he said, rubbing his hands.

"Indeed I will, sir," she answered. "Glad we all are to welcome Miss Esther home again."

She returned to the kitchen and went to work determined to prepare the best meal possible. "It will be fit for a queen," she said to herself as she brought out the special ingredients from the pantry preparatory to going to work.

Mr. Pemberton walked to the dining room, where Mrs. Pemberton with her own hands was putting the finishing

touches to the table. It was not often she deigned to do this.

"How would it do to phone to the florist for some flowers, Eva?" he said. "Somehow the room seems to lack something."

Esther always had flowers everywhere, but since she was gone Mrs. Pemberton had not bothered about them.

"That's just what's the matter, Stanley. I knew it did not look just right, but did not know why. Tell them to send them at once," she said as he went to the drawing room.

"Eva," he called to her, "come here. I don't think a few would look amiss here."

"Why, Stanley, I never knew you to be so excited about the appearance of the rooms before."

"I know it, Eva, but somehow I feel like a young man again. My mind reverts to our own home coming after our bridal trip and how happy we both were. I want Esther to feel how pleased we are to have her with us again. Suppose, Eva, we go and dress for dinner now. Hannah can arrange the flowers when they come. She is very tasty about such things. It just wants an hour to train time, and it will take the carriage fifteen minutes more to reach the house." They walked up stairs still planning for Esther and Tom's welcome.

During the process of dressing Mrs. Pemberton grew very excited over her gown. "I must have some help," she said as she called for Hannah, who had just received the flowers and was unpacking them.

"What do you want, Eva?" asked her husband. "Can't you see Hannah has her hands full?"

"I want her to help me put the Jabot on."

"Let me help you."

"Just take this and fasten it at the back with this stick pin," she said, handing it to him. He took hold of the lace awkwardly and walked behind her, giving it such a hard pull that it came out of place in front.

"Oh, Stanley, look what you have done. Madame la Mode had it arranged so gracefully. I don't believe I can ever get it into place again like she had it."

She struggled with the front while he held on to the back, at her bidding. Eventually they got it into place to suit her.

"Now put the stick pin in quick, before it gets out of place again." In his hurry to do as she requested, he ran it into his finger.

"Ouch!" he cried. "You got that thing named all right, Eva. It's a stick pin for sure. It takes a woman to invent an instrument of torture," he said.

"Be patient, Stanley; you're not used to it, that's all."

"It's enough," he replied. "The thing's hurting me yet."

At length he managed to get it together and pin it.

"Thank you, Stanley. You're a darling," she said, kissing him affectionately. "It was real good of you to take all that trouble to fix it." She took up the mirror to look at it.

"My conscience! Stanley, what have you done?"

"Fastened it, my dear, just the way you told me."

"You have done nothing of the sort, sir. You have pinned the top of one side of the collar to the bottom of the other, and it's all crooked." He put on his glasses and looked at his work critically.

"By jingo, Eva, that's just what I've done. I'll fix it in a jiffy." He went to work again and this time managed to get it straight. After a few more finishing touches, they were ready to go down stairs. Mr. Pemberton looked at his watch, saying: "They will be here in twenty minutes, Eva. That will give us time to take a look at the dining room." They found Hannah, who had just finished her work and was examining it, still in the room.

"That's a great improvement," Mr. Pemberton said to her.

"How much flowers brighten up a room, Eva," he said, addressing his wife.

"Yes," she answered, "and Esther is so fond of them. She will appreciate them."

They went into the drawing room, which was lit up and presented a very comfortable aspect. After standing and looking at it awhile Mr. Pemberton remarked, "All it needs now is Esther's presence. Don't you think we ought to enquire if the cook has everything in readiness?"

"There's no need, Stanley. Hannah says she has prepared all her choicest dishes and intends to surprise us with her culinary art."

"Good," answered Mr. Pemberton; "nothing is too fine for Esther. Five minutes more!" he said, again looking at his watch.

They talked over some few trifles yet to be fixed. They just finished them when Mr. Pemberton stopped suddenly and said, "There's the rumbling of the wheels; they are almost at the door." He hardly uttered the words when the carriage stopped in front of the house.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOM AND ESTHER RETURN FROM THE BRIDAL TRIP.

The door was opened and with a rush and a whirl Esther and Tom were home again. Mr. Pemberton gathered Esther in his arms, and embraced her lovingly, holding her there for some time, until Mrs. Pemberton cried in dismay.

"Esther, why don't you kiss me!" Tom having already performed that office much to her delight. Mr. Pemberton still clung to Esther, but she reached over and kissed her mother affectionately, and putting an arm around each of their waists entered the room.

"How lovely everything looks," she said, "and, mother, you look as if you were going to some swell function."

"All in honor of you, Esther," put in her father, who was as happy as a boy, now that he had Esther with him again. Such a chattering and hum of voices as there was, Mrs. Pemberton asking endless questions about the trip, and what Esther saw, and how were Mabel and Fred, how do you like your new home, until Esther burst into a hearty laugh, and said merrily, "One question at a time, mother dear. But, really, I think Tom and I had better get a little of the dust of travel off us first. You will have to excuse our toilets, as I don't suppose our trunks have got here yet."

"That's so, Eva. We must let them brush up a bit."

Esther and Tom went up stairs, while Mr. Pemberton and his wife commented on their appearance.

"How beautiful Esther looks. She has happiness spread all over her face," remarked Mr. Pemberton, "and Tom, bless him, he looks as if he had discovered a gold mine. They are both the picture of bliss. How glad I am that I got over my folly in time to save them both from the wreck I was making of their lives."

It was only a short time until they reappeared. The whole house seemed to be affected by their presence. The painful silence and stillness that had come over the house after the last guest had left after the wedding, that so oppressed Mr. Pemberton, had vanished now. Esther's merry laugh coupled with Tom's hearty one seemed to echo through the house and fell like music on Mr. Pemberton's ears.

When they were once more seated, Esther undertook to answer some of her mother's questions.

"You have not told me, Esther, how Mabel and Fred are. The dear girl, I did not have half a visit with her when she was here."

"They are just as happy as two love birds, mother. Their place is beautiful, and so is ours. We could hardly tear ourselves away from it. If we had not promised you and father not to stay away long, I don't know when you would have seen us. We were so enraptured, we could not bear to leave it. I wish we could live there always, mother."

"It's no use appealing to me. I never could live in such a place with nothing but trees, flowers and birds around you all the time. You would tire of it too, Esther."

"Not if I had Tom there with me. We are going back again before long."

"Esther, don't leave us again," said her father. "It's too lonely here without you."

"Then let us all go together. If you don't go willingly, we will take you bodily; won't we, Tom?" she said, turning to him.

"Nothing would please me better than to have us all go,"

he replied. "Esther and I have planned all sorts of new ideas for our pleasure and comfort in our home."

"Yes," said Esther, "for one thing, I want more green-houses like Mabel has. She can pick basketfuls of the choicest flowers at a moment's notice."

"Don't persuade your father to go into such a wilderness as that."

"Why, mother, it's perfectly lovely; just like dreamland."

Here dinner was announced. As they entered the dining room Esther was struck with the lovely flowers.

"Your mother had these arranged for your benefit, Esther."

"You were just as eager, Stanley, to have them. In fact, you were the one who suggested getting flowers."

"Then I will thank you both," said Esther, "for the consideration. Tom and I appreciate your thoughtfulness."

The dinner was a work of art. Surely the cook had, as she said she would, a meal fit for a queen.

"Have you a new cook, mother?" Esther asked. "Mamie never sent up anything as elaborate as this!"

"No, Esther, Mamie is here still, but she worked herself into a fever of getting something worthy of Mrs. Seymour's taste."

"Did she do all this for me, mother? I must thank her for it. And that reminds me I have a message for her from Maggie."

"You did not go and see her, did you, Esther?"

"Why, certainly I did, mother. When you wrote and told me about the present from Finnigan's Lane I was at Mabel's. So we both went to her house and thanked her. And, mother, don't be horrified, but I wrote to Mrs. Burgo-meister and thanked her too for her good wishes."

"Esther, I don't know how you can associate with such vulgar people."

"Mother, they are not vulgar. And Maggie's husband is not even poor now. Fred pays him well, besides furnishing him a home. Mrs. Israel is going to the sanatorium next week for treatment. The doctor says six months of rest and careful diet will make a well woman out of her."

But, of course, she will never be robust like Maggie. Her constitution was born in her. Poor Mrs. Israel never had any health, it seems. I think it's splendid of Fred to be so generous; don't you, mother?"

"It's no use asking me about it. I can't understand any of you."

"But me," laughed Tom.

"Yes, Tom, you are the only one that does not bother with such people."

"I don't deserve any credit for it. It just happened so. I had not time or money to indulge in charitable work. But now, if Esther wishes, I can help her with any pet scheme she has in view."

"She has influenced you already, Tom, I see."

"Eva, we have all been too selfish but Esther; thinking only of our own pleasure. Now let us in the future plan for others' happiness."

Mrs. Pemberton made no reply to this, so the conversation turned again on their trip. They spent until late in the evening hearing about it, Mr. Pemberton absorbing every word as he watched Tom and Esther's happy faces. Mrs. Pemberton was very disappointed at Esther's not bringing some new gowns from New York.

"Why, mother, I have dozens of them now that I probably will never wear but a few times. So why should I add to the accumulation?"

"Well, Esther, you know there is always something new coming out."

"That's true, mother, but I would have to wear them day and night to get rid of them."

"Oh, dear, I wish I were a girl again," sighed Mrs. Pemberton, "with your chances, Esther. You could put on a new dress every day; your father is so indulgent to you."

"That would be too fatiguing, mother," laughed Esther.

In the morning Tom sought out Mr. Pemberton and suggested to him that he begin on his duties.

"Your duties, Tom? I don't understand you."

"You told me, father, you would like me to take charge of your affairs for you. But we hardly got started until the

wedding arrangements seemed to clash with it, and we decided to wait until after that event."

"Yes, now I understand you, Tom. But there is really very little to attend to. It was only a ruse of mine to keep you with me."

"I don't want to lead an idle life and grow inactive."

"You won't do that, Tom. I want you for a companion. You can attend to the business too. There will be more to do than you think."

He walked over to the safe, opened it, and asked Tom to look over a package of papers that he had marked complaints.

"These," he remarked, as he handed them to Tom, "are from the different tenants; things they need done to the houses they occupy. It was my custom formerly to throw such things in the waste paper basket. But after my last sickness I concluded to change all that, and while you were gone I placed all I received in the safe and marked them. You can go over them, Tom, and whatever the tenants need you have my authority to give to them."

Tom sat down to examine them. The first one was from a tenant that had occupied a house belonging to Mr. Pemberton for five years, and had never been granted anything he had asked for. Being a carpenter, he made his own repairs. He complained now that the roof had been leaking badly and he could hardly be expected to reshingle it at his own expense, and he wished to know if Mr. Pemberton would see to it before the first of the month. If he did not, he would be forced to move out.

"How about this, father?" asked Tom.

"Do it right away, and anything else he wants."

"It's scandalous to treat anyone so," he muttered to himself. "I find this was written two weeks ago," said Tom, "and it's very near the first of the month now. I had better go and see to that this morning."

Tom looked over the rest. They all wanted repairs done. One man's steps in front of his door had fallen to pieces in decay and he was obliged to use a box to step up on to his porch to reach his door.

"That's poor policy, father," said Tom. "When a man pays his rent regularly, he ought to enjoy some privilege for it."

"You are right, Tom. I have been a hard landlord, very exacting about my rent, but not willing to do anything in return. I want you to go around among the tenants and tell them I will do better in the future."

"I will go just as soon as I can," said Tom as he got up and left the room. He went first to Esther and told her of the conversation.

"I am so glad, Tom, that father is going to do right by them even at this late day. I have been ashamed of the way he has treated them. It seemed to me terrible for us to have such an abundance of luxury and they to have to live in houses that were so badly in need of repair, when there was plenty of money to do it with."

Tom kissed her good-bye, and went out to his morning's work. The first place he went to was the carpenter's. He announced his errand. The man told him how many times he had requested to have his roof repaired, but this was the first time any notice had been taken of it. Tom assured him things would be different from now on, as he was the appointed agent and would personally supervise the property.

"I hope you will treat us better than the other agent," he said.

"I will," answered Tom.

"What is your name, sir?" asked the carpenter.

"Seymour," replied Tom.

"Not Mr. Pemberton's son-in-law?" said the man in terror, for he had talked rather freely of Mr. Pemberton's neglect of his tenants, and especially of his meanness and parsimonious way of treating them.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I did not know you were a connection of the family."

"There's no need to, my good man. From now on you send your complaints to me, and I will see that they are attended to immediately."

He looked over the house and found several things that

needed attention. He left, promising to send a man to do the necessary repairs that afternoon. He spent the rest of the morning visiting among the tenants in that section of the town, leaving a fine impression on them.

On meeting Mr. Pemberton at lunch, the latter inquired how he found things.

"Very bad. I wonder you ever kept a tenant. It was just because, as one man told me, they could not move, as they would be obliged to pay one month's rent in advance. That with the expense of moving, to say nothing of the inconvenience, deterred them."

"Tom, you must take hold and see that they are better cared for in the future."

"I promised them that this morning," he replied. "After lunch I am going to look for some carpenters."

"That's good, Tom. See that they are comfortable."

"I will; but if I overstep the bounds and make them too snug, just tell me. But, I believe, it will pay you to keep your buildings in order. It would not hurt to paint them, at least the ones I saw this morning needed it bad enough."

"Do just what you think necessary, Tom."

As soon as lunch was over Tom went off to look for some carpenters. Esther and her father sat talking together, while Mrs. Pemberton went to answer some invitations that had come that morning.

"Esther," said Mr. Pemberton, "Tom is going to be a great help to me. He can relieve me of all my business cares. I will be glad to have the burden removed from my shoulders. I believe I am getting lazy, Esther. I don't take the interest I used to in money making."

"I am glad of it, father. You will be happier for it. You will find your property increase in value under Tom's care."

"Oh, dear, to think how careless I have been," said Esther suddenly. "I have never delivered Maggie's message to Mamie yet. I must do so at once." So leaving her father, she made her way to the kitchen.

"I forgot to give you a message from your aunt, Mamie."

"Is she well, Miss Esther? beg pardon, Mrs. Seymour I mean." Esther laughed at the correction.

"Yes, Mamie, she is remarkably well. She told me to be sure and tell you to go and see Aggie, as she was very lonesome."

"I don't see as I ought," said Mamie. "She never ast me to her weddin'."

"It was quiet, you know," said Esther.

"How is the woman she took along with her?" said Mamie, making no effort to conceal her contempt for her aunt's friend.

"Poor woman!" replied Esther, sympathetically. "She is not strong. Mr. Fairchild is going to send her to a sanatorium; the doctor says rest and diet will cure her."

"I'd like to know what my aunt wants to pick up with such trash for."

"Don't talk that way," said Esther, severely. "That poor woman would have died, I believe, if your aunt had gone off and left her."

"She's no kin to us."

"That makes no difference. She needed help and I respect your aunt for her kindness to her."

"I don't," said Mamie, tossing her head.

"How is Dinny?" she asked. "The little imp, how I hate him. I'll warrant he's givin' his mother lots of trouble."

"No, indeed, he is at school and behaving very well since he got away from the influence of the children in Finnigan's Lane."

"I suppose after awhile me aunt and uncle will be holding their heads that high they won't know me."

"Why, Mamie, what makes you feel so bitter against your aunt? She is one of the best hearted women in the world. I don't believe prosperity would ever turn her away from her relatives or friends."

"Maybe not," said Mamie, sulkily.

"I forgot to compliment you on the dinner last night and the way in which it was served. It was splendid, Mamie."

"Thank you, ma'am; if everyone was like you, they would be easier to work for."

Esther saw something was wrong with Mamie, so concluded to leave her to herself. She often had such spells

and usually recovered quickest when nobody paid any attention to her. Sometimes she would be overworked and fly off in a tangent if she were spoken to. Other times, when in the best of humors, she would suddenly go off into a tirade about some imaginary wrong. The household were used to her varying moods and were careful not to cross her at those times. She was an excellent cook and as such was treated carefully, for, like all her ilk, she had her off days.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DINNER PARTY.

Esther went in search of her mother and found her still engaged in replying to her invitations.

"Why, mother," she queried, "how are you going to keep all those engagements?" She looked at the answers as she said so that were lying on the table.

"They cover nearly a month, Esther."

"I thought you were going in rather deep if you expected to fulfil them all this week," replied Esther.

"I am going to have a dinner," she said, putting down her pen, "for you and Tom. Mrs. Gaye thinks I ought to."

"I have no objection, mother, provided they are intimate friends. Are you doing it to please us or Mrs. Gaye?"

"Both of you, Esther."

"Tell me whom you intend to invite," she asked.

"Mrs. Gaye to begin with. I am not going to ask her husband. She does not wish it. Miss Smart, Mrs. Goldrocks, Major Temple, Baron Lèger and Mr. Poore."

"I think those people are more to Mrs. Gaye's taste than ours," said Esther.

"They are all good people, Esther," replied her mother. "The Major served with distinction in the British army; Baron Lèger comes of a prominent French family; Miss Smart is Bostonese to her finger tips; and Mr. Poore is very wealthy despite his inappropriate cognomen. He is ter-

ribly smitten with the widow Goldrocks. So I am asking him here to meet her. I have met them all but the gilded widow."

"Where did you find her?" asked Esther.

"She is some western millionaire's widow. He discovered a gold mine, and was considerate enough to die soon after, leaving her his millions."

When Tom came home Esther informed him of the honor that was awaiting them, laying particular stress on the western widow with the untold millions.

"Where did your mother meet this Mrs. Goldrocks?"

"I am sure I could not tell you, Tom, but I suppose at Mrs. Gaye's. You know, she came from the Western States somewhere and always has someone visiting her from there."

Mr. Pemberton took very little interest in the coming dinner, none of the guests being particularly congenial to him; but, as his wife said, they were all good people, so he could not object on that score.

The night of the dinner arrived and as Esther went forward to greet the guests they were all impressed by her remarkable beauty. The Major put up his monocle and gazed in admiration at her sweet face framed with its beautiful hair. "So English, you know," he remarked to Mr. Poore. Baron Lèger stood in a picturesque attitude and expressed his pleasure in her appearance to Miss Smart. "Très charmant! si joli," he said to her as he looked in rapture at Esther as she crossed the room. "Oui, Monsieur," she answered.

Mr. Poore shook hands with her cordially, but his eyes followed Mrs. Goldrocks, who in her vivacious way was complimenting Tom on his wife's attractiveness. Mrs. Pemberton had requested Mr. Poore to take the widow in to dinner; otherwise he would have been very unhappy, as she seemed rather to favor the Major, who was dazzled by her millions.

After the guests were seated the table presented an elegant appearance. The appointments fairly shone with brilliancy. The ladies were all gowned to perfection, and this,

with the gay conversation, made the dinner a great success. Even Mr. Pemberton found himself quite in touch with the gay throng.

The widow divided her favors so equally between the Major on one side of her and Mr. Poore on the other that it was impossible to tell which was the chosen one. If she beamed on one, she immediately turned to the other with her sweetest smile. If she did not dine well, it was her own fault. First one would pass her some dainty, then the other would instantly invite her to share some dish with him; and so all through the meal. When they rose from the table and went to the drawing room, Mrs. Gaye requested Mrs. Goldrocks to sing, which she did. Here again neither suitor gained even an inch over the other. For, first the Major sang a duet with her, his rich baritone blending beautifully with her mezzo soprano. Then Mr. Poore's fine tenor was heard in conjunction with her voice in a tender little love chanson in French, which the Baron was delighted with.

Mrs. Gaye was obliged to be contented with the Major's half hearted attentions during the dinner, but was boldly deserted by him in the drawing room for the stronger attraction of the widow, he having succumbed completely. Mr. Poore seemed to fade into insignificance when compared with the Major, the latter's military bearing giving him a distinction of his own. The widow was having a glorious time and pronounced Mrs. Pemberton an ideal hostess. The latter was proud of her success as an entertainer. After the guests had departed they all acknowledged mother's dinner a great success, in spite of the misgivings they had about it.

"Why, Eva," said Mr. Pemberton at breakfast next morning, "you outdid yourself last night. The widow Goldrocks was a great drawing card."

"Yes, Stanley, wasn't it amusing the way the Major out-rivaled Mr. Poore?"

"I felt sorry for Mrs. Gaye," said Tom. "The men generally flutter around her wherever she goes, but last night Mrs. Goldrocks had all the admirers."

"Yes," laughed Mr. Pemberton, "a rich widow is a hard proposition to beat. Gold is a great magnet; the bigger the pile, the more it draws. I, for one, vote the widow Gold-rocks a gigantic success."

"Oh, Stanley, be careful; someone might hear you, and I would not have her think we made light of her, for anything."

"Are you, too, falling down to worship her gold, Eva?"

The Major was struck hard with the charming widow, but was in a quandry what to do. He knew nothing of her antecedents, and the appalling question presented itself to him, Were her people in "trade," that awful bugbear of all Englishmen. It would be terrible for him to pay his addresses to her, and then find out her people were tradespeople. "Those Westerners are very enterprising," he thought, "and it might be possible they kept a store sometime in their lives." A store—how he hated to use the word. "One has to be very careful of his associations in this free country," he thought, "but, then, she is so refined. I cannot believe such a thing possible." After deliberating over the matter for some time, he concluded to call on Mrs. Gaye and find out about the attractive widow.

"Why, Major," she said, when he brought up the vital question during his call, "I absolutely know nothing of her family, but I *do* know that she is very accomplished and talented. I have enjoyed her visit with me ever so much, and am really sorry she has returned to the hotel."

Getting no satisfaction there, he called at the Pemberton mansion to pay his respects to the family. After a preliminary conversation, he neatly brought up the subject.

"Really, Major," said Mrs. Pemberton, "I don't know what family she belongs to, but I *do* know there are many fine families out West, and she is certainly a lady to the manner born. As to trade, Major, I really don't know whether you would call digging gold a trade or not. I suppose he dug it himself, or he would not have so much of it," she said innocently. "If you will wait a few minutes, I will ask Mr. Pemberton. He knows everything."

"Trade?" he said when she asked him. "What is there

derogatory in trade, I'd like to know. Any occupation is noble if it's carried on honestly. It's surprising how squeamish some people are about such things. The very same people rarely work, yet are contented to live in idleness off the earnings of some accommodating ancestor, who probably did work."

"Then I will tell him you don't know."

"No, Eva, just tell him I don't care a fig how a man makes his money, whether it's by trade or by profession; that's his business and nobody else's."

The Major wished his hostess good-bye and went to the hotel to think the matter over. He was anxious to call on the widow, but still more anxious to know more about her. His finances were in a pitiable state, and here was a chance to replenish them. He grew more and more desperate, until at length he decided to call on her.

Mrs. Goldrocks received him graciously. He pleaded ardently for the privilege of escorting her to the theatre that evening, but owing to a previous engagement she was obliged to refuse him, much to his disappointment. He would have liked to know where her engagement was, but hardly dared to ask. He called frequently after that and was pleased to think how smooth the way was. Mrs. Goldrocks smiled sweetly at his foolish remarks.

"How very susceptible to flattery she is," he thought. "It's easy sailing now. I won't call to-morrow; I don't wish to appear too eager. If I neglect her a little she will be glad to accept me when I do propose. A major in the British army is not to be found every day. Her money will prove very convenient not only to me, but to the rest of the family. I can just imagine how sister will smile with joy when I tell her of my engagement to a millionaire's widow. Ha! Ha! It's too good to be true," he thought. He could picture himself already lounging at his ease in the widow's comfortable home.

He did not call on Mrs. Goldrocks for a couple of days. His intention was to ask her to marry him. "She will be so overjoyed to see me, she will accept me right off the handle." But alas! for the Major's confidence in himself.

He started for the hotel with a measured tread; he was proud of his walk, and always kept step to a tune he hummed quietly to himself as he walked. When he reached the hotel he was informed by the clerk to whom he handed his card that Mrs. Goldrocks had left the hotel. Where she had gone, he did not know.

"There is a gentleman here who arrived from the West yesterday who knows her intimately. He is in the reception room now, and can probably tell you where she is. If you wish, I will take you to him." He did wish; he did not want to lose sight of the widow even for a day. This was his only chance of getting on his feet again, financially speaking. The hotel clerk introduced them.

"My name," said the Westerner, "is Caleb Parker. What's yours?" The Major took out his card case and handed his card to him. He read it quietly and then looked up.

"Major Temple, His British Majesty's Royal Fusileers," eh? Well, stranger, I have no such trimmings to my name but my cheque is good for a million any day. How is yours?" The Major did not reply to this sally.

"The clerk said you wanted to know about Mrs. Goldrocks."

"Yes, I do," answered the Major, resenting the man's manner towards him.

"Wall, she's gone back to Nevada to marry an old flame of hers."

"To what?" said the Major, aghast.

"Just what I said, partner, to get married. It seems to surprise you, but, come to think of it, it's only natural. Her husband owned the richest mine in Dead Man's Gulch, and Jim Thompson owns the Salt Horse mine adjoining it, and what's more natural than that they should join hands and keep it all in the family."

The Major was so astonished that he lost the power of speech. For several minutes he was dumbfounded. Here were his prospects dashed to the ground. He had come to the hotel so hopeful of success, and now was thrown into the depths of disappointment. He heard none of the rest of the conversation; he knew someone was speaking, but

was powerless to answer him. There was nothing left to do but to return to the hotel. He wished the Westerner good afternoon, and stumbled blindly through the corridor of the hotel. Once outside, he strode rapidly to his room. The measured tread and proud bearing he had started out with had vanished. When he entered his room he drew off his gloves and threw them savagely on the dresser.

"To think of the extra expense I went to buying them," he muttered, "and all for nothing. Oh, women! women! you are the most elusive of mortals. One time so coy and pleasing, and another time so gay and deceiving. How can I ever put my trust in your sex again!"

Mrs. Gaye laughed heartily over the Major's "ill luck," as she called it. "Next time he must not be so sure of his captive." Mrs. Pemberton had no sympathy for him, her husband having told her of his scheming to get Mrs. Goldrocks' money.

"She knew it, Eva, and just wanted to give him the lesson he so richly deserved. She may be a widow, but I tell you she is no fool; mark my word for it. The Major will have to seek for pastures new. The clubmen are tormenting him to death. They sent him an immense bouquet with a knot of crepe on it, and sent their condolences with it. I think the Major will find an ocean trip necessary to his health before the week is out."

Mrs. Gaye thoroughly enjoyed the Major's discomfiture. She had not forgiven him for his treatment of her at Mrs. Pemberton's dinner party, and rejoiced at his failure to capture Mrs. Goldrocks and her millions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MAJOR ACCEPTS A POSITION.

The Major's creditors were crowding him uncomfortably close. This, with the ceaseless chaff he was compelled to endure, made his life anything but pleasant. Money he

must have; where to get it was the question. He searched in vain for some friend to help him. In despair he went to Mr. Pemberton and requested a loan.

"What security have you to offer?"

"None," responded the Major, bluntly.

"And yet you expect me to loan you money on a bare promise of payment?"

"That's all I have to offer, sir."

"What's the matter with your going to work and earning an honest living? Do you call it manly to be living off your friends? You have a good constitution; your army training has made you amenable to discipline. What right have you to think it beneath you to labor? There are better men than you supporting themselves by honest toil. Do you consider yourself made of superior clay to the rest of mankind? Be a man, sir! Be a type of some industry. Do you know anything besides soldiering?"

"No, Mr. Pemberton, I do not."

"Well, you go home and think over what I have said, and if you are willing to work, I'll loan you money enough to start you at whatever you decide on."

"But I don't know where to look for a position, Mr. Pemberton."

"You will never make a living looking for a position. Go and look for work, manual or physical, anything so long as it's work. Don't you know that everyone is happier that has some object in life besides idleness?" said Mr. Pemberton, sternly. He had no patience with people like the Major whose pride prevented them from earning a living, yet at the same time that pride was no stumbling block to running into debt—debts that he knew he could not pay.

"If I had any idea where to find work," said the Major, afraid of stirring up Mr. Pemberton's ire by mentioning position again, "I would do as you say."

"Here's where you can get all the information you want," said Mr. Pemberton, picking up the newspaper. "Why there's columns and columns of help wanted." He hastily ran over the wants.

"'Wanted—A man to dig potatoes,'" he read. "No, that

would not do; it might blister those soft hands of yours. Ah, here is the very thing.

"'Wanted—A drill master for St. Bruno's Academy for Boys. An army officer preferred.'

"There's the identical *position*; that's what you want, is it not? It's just what you understand, and you are just what they want."

The Major was pleased with the idea; he liked the tone of the request. He would not call it advertisement, an army officer preferred. That sounded as if he would be recognized as a gentleman and an equal.

"Try that," said Mr. Pemberton. "Probably the pay is good." The Major thanked him, and promised to go to the academy.

"If you secure that position, you can have all the money you want, but I'll never put a premium on laziness by loaning money to a man who thinks himself above toil."

The Major walked to his rooms pondering over Mr. Pemberton's words. He had given him food for thought. "He is right," he thought. "I have no authority to live off any of my friends. When I look at it in the proper light, it's unjust. I can take this position if it is still available and still be regarded as a gentleman among my fellow officers."

Once inside his rooms he made a careful toilet, and armed with the address of the academy walked in its direction with a military precision born of constant training and drilling. As he came in view of the grounds and buildings of the Academy, his old pride began to assert itself. It was all he could do to muster up the courage necessary to interview the professor. He walked with a leisurely but military air up the avenue that led to the hall. He presented his card to the attending servant, and was ushered into a cosy parlor.

The professor came into the room holding the card in one hand and swinging his glasses carelessly in the other.

"Major Temple, I believe," he said, wondering what the aristocratic looking Major wanted to see him for. "Probably has some sons he wishes to place under my supervision," he thought.

"I am Major Temple," he answered, echoing the professor. "An unpleasant circumstance necessitates my employing my time. A friend drew my attention to your request in the daily paper for a drill master. If I could attend to the duties in a satisfactory manner, I would like to do so," said the Major, trying to disguise the fact that he was looking for so vulgar a thing as a situation.

The professor was very much taken with the Major's commanding stature. "This is just the man I have been looking for," he thought, "a thorough gentleman. His presence will add tone to the school. How elevating it will sound on the circulars that the boys' daily training and drill is under the supervision of Major Temple, late of His British Majesty's Royal Fusileers."

The professor asked him what salary he expected. The Major replied haughtily that as he never had stooped before to earn anything, he knew nothing whatever about such things.

The professor informed him what he usually paid for such services. "Of course that includes room and board at the Academy."

The Major was profound in his thanks and went with the professor and put the boys through a drill, "just merely to show you what I am capable of," he remarked.

"Would it be convenient for you to begin your duties tomorrow morning?" asked the professor.

"It would gratify me to do so," replied the Major, suavely.

The professor thanked him heartily for the honor he did him in affiliating himself with the faculty of the Academy. The Major bowed low, and after wishing him a cordial "Good day, sir," saluted in true military fashion, wheeled about and strode down the avenue with the air of a general.

Thus it happened that the Major began to earn a living. He went to his rooms, packed his things, and was about to remove them to the Academy, but was detained by the landlord.

"Not so fast, my friend," he said. "Those trunks remain in my possession until your bill is paid."

"Sir," said the Major, "this is an outrage! How dare

you treat a gentleman so! Do you know who I am?" he said, his face purple with rage. "I am Major Temple of His British Majesty's Royal Fusileers."

"I don't care a continental who you are. I want my bill paid."

The Major stuttered and stammered about the lack of respect that is paid to a British officer when he is abroad.

"I shall report this insult to my government. I shall have redress for this affront."

"Come, sir, I have not the time to listen to such heroics. You give me the money for your room and board and I will hand over your trunks."

He fretted and fumed over the alleged insult, "not only to me," he said, but to the British Army in general." However, the landlord coolly insisted on a settlement before the trunks could leave the premises. At last, seeing it was useless to argue the matter any longer, he left the room, uttering imprecations on the landlord. He hurried to Mr. Pemberton, telling him of the insult he had been subjected to.

"I am literally boiling with rage," he said, "to think that a gentleman cannot be protected from such rapacious fiends as your hotel men are." Mr. Pemberton smiled at the Major's anger.

"Come, Major," he said, "look at this thing in a rational light. These hotel men paid for what they feed you with; why should you not pay them in return? You admit you are in debt; why go in deeper, when you know you can't pay what you already owe. I will help you pay your indebtedness to this hotel man, but keep out for the future. This position you have taken will help you. No one will think less of you for it. You are just as much a gentleman doing something, in fact more so to my notion, than you were lounging around the hotel parlors."

The Major gradually cooled off under Mr. Pemberton's good influence, thanking him cordially for his kindness. He returned to the hotel and paid his bill, ignoring the landlord's apologies. He followed his trunks out and forwarded them to the Academy, feeling, "There, at least, I will be among gentlemen."

By evening the Major was comfortably ensconced in his new home. Now that the shock of seeking remuneration for his services was over, he really liked the employment. He was among cultured people and also had entrée to the Pemberton mansion, which was noted with satisfaction by the professor. He liked the faculty to be in touch with millionaires. So taking it all in all, the Major felt his lines had fallen in very pleasant places. He mailed several circulars to his friends in England, for they read in such a manner as to lead any one to think that he had conferred a benefit on the academy by condescending to be allied with it. This pleased him immensely.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated when he read them, "there are some people who appreciate a gentleman."

The Major was very grateful to Mr. Pemberton for putting him in the right direction. It never occurred to him to earn the money he was so anxious to spend, but now that the ice was broken, he did not mind it at all. "It's just like surf bathing," he thought. "After the first shock is over, one really enjoys it." He became very interested "in his boys," as he called them, and was pleased when the professor noted the vast improvement in their carriage.

"It takes a military man to train them right," he remarked. "I might drill them forever, Major, and not have any such results."

"Precisely," answered the latter, holding himself a little more erect, if possible. "It gives the Academy a distinction from other schools," he said with conscious pride.

The Major had undertaken to teach Latin, his predecessor having left to take a position at a nearby college. This, together with what he received as drill master and his half pay from the British government, placed him in very comfortable circumstances, his post as Latin instructor giving him an equality with the other teachers. As soon as he drew his first quarter's salary he returned Mr. Pemberton his loan, expressing his gratitude for the timely accommodation.

Things were now moving smoothly with the Major, his experience with Mrs. Goldrocks serving him as a lesson to

avoid widows in the future. He was very careful after that unpleasant experience whom he favored with his attentions.

"Major, don't you feel vastly more contented, now that you are independent of your friends. They don't dodge you, I notice, as they did when you were always requesting a loan of them."

"You are right, Mr. Pemberton. I am better for the lesson you gave me. I enjoy my occupation and now reason like you do, that a man ought to support himself and not sponge on his friends."

"Exactly," replied Mr. Pemberton, "and you feel more of a man too for it." The Major had to acknowledge he did.

"Thanks to you, my friend, for revealing the fact to me."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ESTHER AND HER FATHER DISCUSS THEIR PLANS.

Tom took Mr. Pemberton at his word, and busied himself repairing and improving the houses that were under his care. He spared no pains to make them more comfortable for the occupants. His days were spent in planning various improvements and sanitary measures necessary for their convenience. Mr. Pemberton relinquished all care of his property to Tom, who never ceased to marvel at the careless way the buildings had been looked after.

"If I owned them," he thought, "every tenant would have moved out." Several of them, in fact, had been without tenants for almost a year. These buildings Tom made habitable by repairing and painting them, and this kept him busy most of the time.

Mrs. Pemberton spent her time visiting and shopping with Mrs. Gaye, while Esther and her father talked over their plans which they had laid down during the excitement incidental to the wedding. Now they had time to formulate them. Their idea was to found a home for the tired and broken down mothers of the poorer neighborhoods, who had exhausted their strength in rearing and helping to sup-

port large families, which, when their health broke down, they invariably threw on the public to be cared for, unable to bear the burden themselves. Esther thought this would be one of the best charities to establish. She had great sympathy for these worn out mothers who gave the best of their lives, for what? Some times their children turned out well, but more often the opposite. Each one's advent was only an increased burden on the mother, and as soon as they were old enough, they were turned out to earn the few cents that were so badly needed. Here they received most of their education, and by the time they came to an age when most children were considered old enough to go to school, they were well on the road that makes hardened criminals.

"These mothers could take their youngest children with them into the home, father," said Esther.

"That would usually mean about three of them, Esther," he replied. "It looks as if we would have to have a children's house attached to it. If we do that, every parent would be throwing their children on us for support."

"But, father, this would be for the ones whose mothers we were caring for."

"This phase of human life is a puzzle to me," said Mr. Pemberton.

"Two or three well-bred, well-fed and well-raised children to me would be preferable to eight or ten, as the case may be, of half starved, half clothed and half educated ones. Some of them are bound to be neglected and suffer from lack of proper training, and perhaps find their way to reform schools and prisons. But how are we going to remedy it?"

"That's it, father. It's a subject for deeper thought than the average person gives it. But to get back to our plans, father. Suppose we design a building that has one department for mothers and another for children, where they could be placed under a trained nurse's supervision. Perhaps by keeping the younger ones from the streets and directing their minds in the right direction, we could make good boys and girls out of them."

"Then what about the older ones? They would influence them on their return to their homes. It's a serious problem, Esther, but let us see if we cannot find some solution to it. I wonder if Tom could help us any?"

"That's a good idea, father; he may have some good suggestions to offer that would be worth considering. If it were just a few children, we could help the whole family, but to take six or eight, at the least, from each mother would be too great an undertaking."

When Tom came in to lunch they told him about their plans. "But we have struck a snag, Tom," said Mr. Pemberton, "and we want your assistance." He unfolded the plan that he and Esther had designed.

"The question of children has been brought to my mind rather vividly this morning," said Tom. "Where I have the men working, putting a foundation under one of the houses, the man and his wife have been quarreling all the morning over a grocer's bill. He accused her of not exercising enough economy in the household, but she held her own by declaring that he ate most of the food that came into the house, as the children were nearly always sick. They had it hot and heavy for a long time.

"I discreetly kept my distance, but was eventually dragged into the dispute by the wife, who called me into the house to give my opinion on the subject by showing me the children, and asking me if they could have eaten the amount the bill called for. One look at their pinched and blanched faces was enough. They did not look as if they ever had eaten much of anything. I asked the mother how it came that she and her husband, who looked so robust, had such sickly children. She said the father ate and drank all he made, leaving her and the children to live the best way they could.

"How about looking after such cases as that?" said Tom. "As father's agent I find there are plenty of children who have fathers that are either drunken or lazy, and who care nothing for their comfort or health, but depend upon their wives to support them. Many of these women are doing a man's work, besides taking care of from six to seven or

eight children. I pity those children," said Tom, feelingly. "It seems as if a good wash and a good meal would be heaven to them."

"Then, father," said Esther, "let us plan some arrangement to include the children."

"How would it do," said Tom, "to consult the people that make a business of attending to charities and get their opinions. They ought to be able to suggest something practicable."

"That's what we will do, Tom. Your idea is all right. I am determined to do some good with my money," said Mr. Pemberton, "while I am here, and yet leave Esther and you an abundance for your maintenance."

"I think you are right, father," answered Tom. "It does not seem just to me for us to revel in so much luxury, while others go hungry. Yet I have seen men that could keep their families well provided for spend their time in idleness and complaining, when it all lay with themselves. However, we are not dealing with the individual but the masses, and these are the ones we want to consider. Another thing, father, when this building is finished and ready for occupation, get some reliable physician to examine the cases before admitting them. This will prevent fraud, and let only the worthy ones in. There are always impostors in every charitable institution, so I think such a precaution is necessary."

"Esther, we must take Tom into our scheme too; he knows more about it than we do."

So the three planned together, Tom insisting on adding his share. He decided to lay away part of his income to buy clothing for the children. At dinner they told Mrs. Pemberton of their plans. She was disgusted.

"Stanley, I am surprised at you and Tom. Esther I am used to, but to think of you and Tom planning such things! Why, what are we going to do for wash women and scrub women, if you are going to gather them all in, and take care of them like that? They surely won't work after they once get into your—what do you call it?"

"Home," suggested Mr. Pemberton, "that is until we decide on a better name, Eva."

"That's good enough, father," said Esther. "It expresses the whole thing."

"I suppose you will dine them on terrapin stew," continued Mrs. Pemberton, who was vexed at what she called her husband's foolishness.

"Not quite, Eva; you know, they are not educated up to that diet. We will give them plain, wholesome, nourishing food."

"And who will do our work, Stanley, while you are nourishing them?" she asked.

"Don't worry, Eva, there will always be an army of unfortunates who will have to toil, and are willing and glad, too, of the chance to do it. But think, Eva, how much those poor, tired, worn mothers will appreciate a place where they can rest and gather their strength again. How would you like to spend your time as they do, Eva? Wash, bake, iron, mend, scrub, clean windows, darn and contrive for a large family, and perhaps not one of them you ever ask to sit down and rest, while they did your work for you. You need not look in surprise, Eva, there are such families, where the mother is the drudge, and drudges on, and on, until the day comes when the hard worked machine collapses, and the tired, knotted and gnarled hands are folded in rest forever."

"Don't talk like that, Stanley. It makes me feel bad."

"I am sorry, Eva, but I have only expressed it very mildly. It's pitiful," said Mr. Pemberton, "to see a whole house full of children, and none willing to spare the mother, as is so often the case. Of course, I am talking of the working ones, that have to be cook, seamstress and laundress combined, to say nothing of the thousand and one things a mother's willing hands always find to do. Now, Eva, we have told you how we spent our time, so it's only fair you should return the compliment."

"Well," answered Mrs. Pemberton, "Mrs. Gaye and I went shopping. Her husband was just hateful this morn-

ing. He wrote a poem, as if that was anything, and Mrs. Gaye burnt it up by mistake. He laid it on the table in the library, and she picked it up, thinking it was useless, and threw it in the grate. He fumed and stormed about the loss it would be to the literary world. I asked him how much it was worth, and you ought to have seen the scowl on his face, Stanley, when he answered me.

"He said, 'Madam' (and I just hate to be called Madam, and he knows it, too), 'it was an ode to Thyriza, a sublime thought, the effort of a brilliant brain flash.'

"I asked him if Thyriza was a man or a woman, and you ought to have seen the expression on his countenance, Stanley. It was fiendish, but he answered, and said: 'Thyriza was a goddess, note the gender, Madam,' and he looked as if he was going to scalp me. 'The goddess, I say,' he roared, 'of profound meditation.' He turned his back to me, and I slipped out of the room as quick as I could.

"I believe he would have killed me if he dared, he was so angry. I am sure I said nothing to provoke him. I asked Mrs. Gaye what made her marry him. I told her I would not marry such a man for any money, and she said she wouldn't either, if she was doing it over again."

"Eva," said Mr. Pemberton, "how is it you always manage to stir Mr. Gaye up."

"I don't know, Stanley. I try to keep out of his way, too."

No more was said for the present about the plans, but that afternoon Esther wrote to Mabel about a scheme that she and Fred were talking over when Tom and she were visiting with them a few weeks before. She told her what her father and she were planning.

In discussing it later with her father he said, "We have studied this over, Esther, and really have not yet come to a definite solution of the problem."

"Suppose we invite Mabel and Fred to visit us, then we can all talk over our project seriously."

"Fred's ideas are excellent; he has gone among that class of people, and knows all the circumstances connected with their lives better than we do. You, Esther, know very little about them, and Tom and I know still less about such

people. Let us wait until Fred comes. I don't suppose he will object," said Mr. Pemberton, thoughtfully.

"Oh, no, father," said Esther, "he will be sure to come, if we explain why we are so anxious to see him. He is more than willing to help in anything that will be an assistance to his fellow creatures."

The answer came from Fred, and it was just as Esther expected it would be. "He was pleased to think that Mr. Pemberton was getting interested in charitable work. There is an awakening everywhere in the cause of charity. It helps the work to have such men as Mr. Pemberton bestowing their time and money to further it," he wrote. "Mabel and I will be with you probably by to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Pemberton was very excited over the prospect of a visit from Mabel and Fred.

"We must do something to entertain them while they are here."

"Yes," said Esther, "I think another of your famous dinners, mother, would be just *au fait*. Mabel would enjoy something that way better than a card party."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MABEL AND FRED COME TO VISIT.

Mrs. Pemberton sent the carriage to meet them the morning they came. Their visits were always a treat to Esther and her father. Mabel was so refreshing after the usual society ladies that gathered around Mrs. Pemberton. The world was still bright and beautiful to her, and the people in it were as good and noble as ever. The charm of life held plenty of joy yet for her. She had not grown weary of it all, like some young matrons, who had been satiated with its pleasures till the sweetness of it all cloyed them. She took her joys just as they came, day by day, and had not tried to crowd them all in at once, as some had, leaving only the dregs for the rest of their lives. Esther looked

forward to the pleasure she knew she would have during Mabel's visit.

Mr. Pemberton and Tom had everything in readiness to discuss. The rough plans of their building were already made and ready for the architect to work on. All that remained was to wait for Fred's approval.

"Tom," said Mr. Pemberton, "I am getting old, and I want to see this started while I am here to see it work. I never could tolerate delays of any kind in business."

So it happened that as soon as Fred arrived he made his way with Tom to the library, leaving Mrs. Pemberton, Esther and Mabel together to do the visiting. As soon as the greetings were over, they took their seats and talked over every known charity that had been brought to a successful issue, Tom having inquired into them at Mr. Pemberton's request.

"The building I desire to erect," said Fred, "is much for the same purpose, only that I intend mine for widows that are working alone to bring up their families. Any decent, self-respecting man that is not absolutely lazy can get on in the world, but it's hard for a woman. She naturally has not the strength to battle for a home and a living like a man has. I won't help women that have husbands," continued Fred. "I have seen too many with drunken ones that made no effort to keep either themselves or their children even fairly respectable. Another thing, too, I have noticed; so many of these women were no better than the sots they lived with. In fact, I have figured it out this way, that a woman that will live with a coarse, drunken man sinks to his level and her children go down with her. Such mothers rarely take any interest in schools or any thing that will uplift their families, but rather encourage all kinds of petty theft and similar crimes, under the pretence that every one does it. This, of course, shows a low grade of morals."

"I have seen more of such life than you have, Mr. Pemberton. I made it a hobby once. Now I consider it a duty. On visiting the factories, I found more women working to support their families than I ever dreamed of. Some

were widowed by death, some by desertion, others by prisons. These are the ones I regard most worthy of help. I don't think there is as great a chance of fraud with them as there would be with your scheme."

"But," said Mr. Pemberton, "we must not visit the sins of the husbands on the worn out wives."

"That's true," said Fred. "I often think if we could only get those children from these irresponsible parents young enough to train, we might be able to lessen crime. The money that goes to support prisons and reform schools would be better spent in the first place by removing the cause of crime than waiting for the results. Parents that allow their children to disobey them and defy them are lacking in the true parental feeling. You will always notice in them the almost entire lack of affection. They would give their children up willingly if any one would take them off their hands. A good father or mother will never neglect their children, and will almost come to the verge of starvation before they would part with them, and I doubt if they would even then. But these are not the ones we want to reach; they will take care of themselves. It's the ones that are turned out on the streets we want to get, before it's too late. Mr. Pemberton, I am only encroaching on your time, but I am so interested in these unfortunate children, I forget myself; so please excuse me."

"No, Fred, you are not using up our time; we have plenty. I like to hear your views; you have been amongst them, and know what you are talking out."

Fred would argue no more, but insisted on Mr. Pemberton discussing his proposed work. Before the day was out they had everything in shape for the architect to design.

Tom was getting as much interested as the rest. It was a new experience to him, this charity work. He was pleased when Mr. Pemberton told him to phone to the architect to call.

"Where are you going to put up the buildings, father?" he asked.

"They ought to be somewhere out of town," answered Mr. Pemberton. "A place like we intend to build ought

to have lawn and trees, some cheerful aspect about it. Don't you think so, Fred?" asked Mr. Pemberton.

"By all means," said Fred. "The very fact of getting away from those smoky localities would make trees and flowers almost a necessity. You have no idea how those poor people enjoy a day out in the country, where every movement is as free to them as it is to the birds. I'll never have signs put on my lawns warning people to keep off. There's something nice about the feel of soft grass under one's feet."

"How would it do," said Mr. Pemberton, "if we three went out after lunch and selected a spot. The architect could come in the evening just as well as in the afternoon, I should think. You attend to that, Tom, and we will go as soon as convenient and choose the location for the Home."

"Come, Fred," said Tom, "let us join the ladies."

They did so. Mabel and Esther questioned them about the results of their joint ideas, and were pleased to hear that they were going to go ahead themselves and not form committees for this and for that branch of business and keep it probably hanging in the balance for months.

"Your father is like me, if he is going to do anything he does it right away."

"Yes," said Esther, "he is afraid he won't live long enough to do all the good he wants to. He looks back with regret now on what he calls his wasted years, but I tell him most lives have their vain regrets. There is always a something we wish we had done or something else we would undo, if we could."

"Well, all I hope, Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, who so far had taken no part in her husband's plans, "is that your father won't make beggars of us. It seems to me ridiculous, this bothering yourselves about these people, and dragging Tom into it too."

"I am doing this of my own free will, not under coercion, mother."

"I am surprised at you, that's all, Tom. You used to be so sensible."

"I hope I am yet," he said, laughing.

Here lunch was announced and all talk of business dropped, and a good social time was enjoyed by all. After it was over and as soon as expedient, the carriage was ordered and they drove off to look over the country they had in view. Here they found many available locations, but no one wished to sell them.

At length they came to a place with a sightly elevation which they unanimously agreed upon as just the spot for such a building. The price was high, but Mr. Pemberton did not demur. It was what he wanted and he was bound to have it, no matter what the cost was. He never stopped at price when a thing suited him. The next move was to find the owner. On making inquiries they found he resided at one of the nearby towns.

"That can be managed by phone," said Mr. Pemberton. "If possible I would like to meet the owner some time tomorrow and close the deal." He was delighted with the site, and was almost boyish in his enthusiasm.

"Tom, I am going to get a great deal of happiness out of this project of ours. I have never felt such interest in anything I ever undertook before. We must get it going without delay."

"It was dark before they reached the Pemberton home, but a happier trio would have been hard to find. The dinner was a merry affair, and before it was quite finished the architect arrived. Tom, at Mr. Pemberton's suggestion, conducted him to the library and gave him their hasty plans to examine while they were at their meal. He returned to the table, but Mr. Pemberton was so anxious to talk with the architect that he could not finish his meal, and after fidgeting for several minutes, asked them to excuse him. He hastened to the library, where Tom and Fred found him later with the perfected plans in his hands.

"This is going to be a great thing for father," said Esther, after he left the room. "He has handed over all his business to Tom's care, and this will be like a hobby with him."

"Yes," replied Tom. "He hardly realizes the amount of

work that is ahead of him; carpenters, brickmasons, plumbers, painters, and I don't know how many more artisans; but he will be happy, as you say, Esther, in finding congenial employment for his time."

"Your father reads too much too. I notice he complains a great deal about his eyes lately. This will keep him away from his books part of the time at least. How long will it take to finish this building?" inquired Mrs. Pemberton.

"Quite a while, mother," replied Esther, wondering at her mother taking enough interest in it to ask.

"Then I suppose I'll never see your father only at meal times."

"Why, of course you will, mother. Go into the library and enter into his plans; he would love to have you there with him."

"No, Esther, I could not do it. You know what your father is. The first thing he would be asking me would be how many bricks went to the square foot, or how many yards of plastering it would take for the walls, and I'd be crazy before you knew it. I'd rather visit with Mrs. Gaye, Esther. She never asks foolish questions. She is the only sensible friend I've got."

"That is from whose viewpoint you look at it, mother."

"I know, Esther, you don't like Mrs. Gaye."

"I do, mother, but she has no depth to her mind."

"But she is a good woman for all that. What has become of Mabel, Esther?"

"She is in the library listening to father's orations on his pet charity. You don't know how glad I am, mother, that father did not forget the resolve he made when he was so sick. What is the use of all this money he has accumulated, if not to help some one less fortunate? But, mother, you are not paying any attention to what I am saying."

"No, Esther, I'll admit I'm not. I was thinking whom I would ask to dinner to meet Mabel. I think Major Temple ought to be one. He's English and so is Mabel.

He looks well at the table, too. And I must have Mrs. Gaye. She's such a dear."

"Suppose we fill out the rest with people that would be congenial to Fred," said Esther. "Mrs. Gaye would weary him with her silly talk. He likes some one that is jovial and witty. Fred likes fun and so does Mabel. Just four more would be enough; twelve makes a nice number for a dinner, don't you think so, mother?"

"Just as you say, Esther," she replied."

Now that the building was designed and in the hands of the architect, Fred and Tom were at leisure to visit. They enjoyed being together again. Their only regret was that Tom could not occupy his country home near them more of the time, but Mr. Pemberton declared he and Esther must remain with him most of the time, as he could not do without them. And it was out of the question to live altogether in the country, as Mrs. Pemberton disliked it so much.

The evening of the dinner came, and Mabel looked radiant in her dinner gown. Mrs. Pemberton was proud of her guest. Most of the friends had met her before except the Major. He had expressed great pleasure when Mrs. Pemberton asked him to dinner to meet her.

"I appreciate the honor," he said, "of meeting any of your friends, especially one of my own countrywomen," and he straightened up with visible pride.

On entering the drawing room, Mrs. Pemberton conducted him to Mabel. He extended his hand in welcome. "Pon my honor!" he exclaimed; "this is a pleasure I don't really deserve," he said as he threw out his chest in a happy manner. The Major was just at an age when he liked to pay court to young ladies. It helped him to forget that he was getting dangerously near the sere and yellow leaf time of life.

"Your name, Major, is very familiar to me," said Mabel.

"There are many English Temples," said he. "It is a distinguished name." Mabel had hard work to keep from smiling; she wondered if he considered himself one of them.

"My father," she continued, "had a college chum named

Temple. He left England for India when I was a child. Papa used to correspond with him until a few years ago. Then his letters remained unanswered so long that he concluded his friend must have died, although he never could hear of it authentically."

"I was in India several years," said the Major. "It's a beastly climate, don't you know, and there are so many venomous snakes and all those kind of things too. I remained in Madras until I could stand the climate no longer. It's hard on the liver, don't you know?" said the Major.

"It was in Madras that papa's friend was. Perhaps you may have met him; his name was Ashburton Temple."

"That's my name, Mrs. Fairchild," said the Major, excitedly. "Who was your father?" he asked eagerly.

"Rodney Lloyd," answered Mabel.

"Pon my honor, Mrs. Fairchild, this is the strangest incident in my life. Rodney Lloyd was my inseparable friend at Oxford and his brother Charles was my fag. Dear me, this quite unnerves me," said the Major. "To think that you are Rodney's daughter! He never had but one child, so you must be the one I always called Little Cherub. I used to trot you on my knee many a time in the old days in England. I was a young man then. That is, I was younger than I am now," corrected the Major, who hated to be thought old.

The Major was quite overcome with the discovery. Mabel and he talked over mutual friends in England.

"Uncle Charles," she said, "lives in New York, you know, Major."

"Whom did he marry?" he asked. "I have a vague recollection of your father writing to me telling me that Charles had committed matrimony. Great joke that was, wasn't it?" said the Major. "Ha! ha! it makes me laugh yet."

"He married a lovely New York belle. Aunt Maud is just charming. You must come and visit us, Major, and I will take you to see them."

"I should be most happy," he responded. "I have faced surprises at the cannon's mouth, so to speak," remarked the Major, "but this is the greatest surprise of all. I hardly

yet comprehend the fact that I am conversing with Rodney's daughter."

Dinner was announced and the Major gallantly offered his arm to Mabel with all the old time grace. He felt a sense of possession now in Mabel, since he found she was his friend's daughter.

"I will write to papa to-morrow," said Mabel, "and tell him how we met."

"I will write too," responded the Major. "How I would like to shake his hand again."

"Do you know, Mrs. Fairchild, your father was one of the most brilliant scholars in our town. He translated the Iliad and the Odyssey into English before the rest of us had even mastered the Greek alphabet. I have some old photos of your father taken when we were both at Oxford. I would like to show them to you while you are here visiting."

"Unless you could bring them to-morrow evening, I am afraid I will not be able to see them," replied Mabel, "as we leave for home the morning after."

"I will beg Mrs. Pemberton's permission to be her guest again to-morrow evening. Then I can show them to you," said the Major.

By this time they were seated at the table. The excitement of meeting his old friend's daughter did not diminish his appetite. They had no such dinners as this at the Academy. The professor had apologized for the meagerness of the menu by saying it was the greatest kind of a crime to feed growing boys on rich diet. So the fare was of the poorest, although the table appointments and manners were perfect. However, as most of the boys had their own pocket money, they were able to "fill up," as the boys expressed it, on the outside.

The Major paid strict attention to his dinner, much to Mabel's amusement. She was obliged to talk to her next neighbor at the table, but by the time the dessert came on he recovered his speech and entertained her with the pranks he and her father had played on their friends at Oxford. The effect of the dinner was showing on the Major. He

seemed well satisfied with himself and felt that sense of contentment that such men enjoy when they partake of a good meal.

After they returned to the drawing room the news became general that the Major had discovered his old friend's daughter in Mrs. Fairchild.

"Isn't it like a romance," said Mrs. Gaye to her friend.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pemberton, "and to think of the Major once trotting Mabel on his knee!"

"I admire his taste," laughed Mr. Pemberton. "Who wouldn't trot her on their knee?" he remarked as he looked at Mabel's blushing face.

"Don't blush, Mabel," said her husband. "It isn't fair to resurrect all one's foolish actions before they have reached a responsible age, is it?"

The Major hardly knew how to understand their chaff, but after a while it dawned on him, and he joined as heartily as the rest in the fun. In the morning Mabel wrote to her father of her meeting the Major.

"How pleased he will be to hear it," she thought. "He was always wondering if he had died or simply forgotten him."

She wrote too to Uncle Charles. But when he received the letter it was not with feelings of joy. "So that old codger has turned up at the Pembertons' home! Doesn't it beat all, how such people hang on to life. I always hoped a bullet had got him before now. I'd like to have my hands on him. How he used to make me jump and run, to do his bidding at Oxford."

The Major entertained the faculty at the Academy next day with the meeting of his old friend's daughter.

"It was a most remarkable coincidence," said one of the teachers.

"Did you say," asked the professor, "that she was Mrs. Fairchild. Not the wife of the philanthropist, surely?"

"The same," said the Major, with satisfaction. The professor looked at the Major in astonishment.

"He certainly does associate with the first families," he thought, "and that's a thing none of our other teachers did

do. We must advertise the Major more; it will give *éclat* to the school. What a fortunate thing it was for us that he saw our advertisement in the paper." The professor little knew what led to his looking for the position, and how painfully low his funds were when he accepted it.

The Major always preserved his dignity, even under the most trying of all circumstances, an empty stomach. But now all those tiresome days were forgotten. He was on visiting terms with two multi-millionaires. His star was surely in the ascendency. He thought with delight of how many fine dinners would come his way, dinners such as the rest of the faculty never tasted. Of course, he would not be expected to return this hospitality, as he was only a guest at the Academy. He never called himself drill master or Latin teacher, but just simply a guest. The professor treated the Major now with greater courtesy than ever.

"He must stay with us at all hazards," he told them. His acquaintance with the Pembertons was already bringing good results, several of their friends having placed their boys in the academy. The Major had established a "visitors' day" after the English custom. On these occasions tea was served on the lawn. These days became social events in the life of the Academy. They were hailed with delight by the boys, who had grown weary of the monotonous routine of their school life.

"It's nice," remarked one of them, "to have our mothers and sisters and other fellows' sisters drink tea with us once in a while. It's tea, too; not hot water like we get other days."

"It looks good to see the butter on our bread, too, without the aid of a magnifying glass," said another.

"The Major's all right, even if he is a stuck up Englishman," said a third one.

The Major's acquaintance with the Pembertons was looked on as quite a thing for the academy. The professor would speak with pride of it to the newcomers, who were equally awed by it, for they all knew of Mr. Pemberton, the great financier. And now that Mr. Fairchild, the philanthropist, was to be added to his visiting list, the faculty

felt indeed honored by having the Major among them. They listened with more respect to his recitals of what he had done when he was at Oxford than had been their custom. Usually his stories became very wearisome, but now they heralded them with delight.

The Major excused himself early from his duties, as he was invited to dine *en famille* with the Pembertons. He gathered up his old time photos and took them with him. Mabel had remembered many things she wished to ask him and had delayed her father's letter which she was writing until she made the inquiries.

The professor rather envied the Major his intimacy with the Pembertons, and openly hinted that he would like to become acquainted with them. But the Major totally ignored his hints. He intended to keep that privilege to himself. He knew the faculty looked upon him as a particular friend of the Pembertons, and he intended to keep up the delusion. His youthful friendship for Mabel's father, he felt, was going to be a tie that would bind him to both families. He was quite exultant over the idea.

Dinner was almost on the table when he reached the house. So they postponed looking over the photos until the meal was over. Mr. Pemberton asked many questions about the Academy and the work done there.

"How do these schools compare with our free public schools, Major?" he asked.

"Very favorably, indeed! Your school system everywhere I find very progressive since my connection with the Academy. I have paid particular attention to the matter of education, and find everywhere your teachers are men and women of more than ordinary intelligence."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Major. So many find fault with our system and say it does not educate."

"They are mistaken, Mr. Pemberton. Your working class gets most of their education there, and they are mostly above the average in point of education. I never saw in any country, and I have traveled considerably, sir, more intelligent workmen. Your schools bring out these qualities, I am convinced."

Every one was anxious to see the photos. So, as soon as they left the table, they asked the Major to show them to them. He unfolded the package deliberately. Mabel was the first to get a glimpse of them and enjoyed seeing them, though it created a sense of home sickness that surprised her. The old pictures of her father made her think of her home in England. Though she knew them perfectly, they were not as she remembered or knew him, but as the Major knew him years ago.

"Oh, Major, I do wish you could coax papa to come and visit us. I know he would come willingly if he could persuade mamma to come too, but she has such a terrible dread of the ocean. If you wrote to him, Major, he might induce mamma to venture. We really had a delightful trip all the way over."

"So did I," replied the Major. "It all depends on the time of the year you cross the Atlantic."

Mrs. Pemberton and Mrs. Gaye were still examining the pictures to see if they could detect any resemblance between Mabel and her father.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pemberton, "she has the same forehead and eyes, and even stands like he does."

"I never saw a father and daughter resemble each other so closely," said Mrs. Gaye, examining the photos again.

The Major and Mabel turned around. Mabel was anxious again to look at the photo she was supposed to resemble so much. She looked at it, laughing merrily.

"Why, that's the Major when he was a young man, not papa."

Mrs. Gaye felt mortified at her mistake, but Mrs. Pemberton, nothing daunted, still argued it showed a great likeness to Mabel. Mrs. Gaye rose to go, she having just made a hurried call of a few minutes. Mrs. Pemberton tried to persuade her to remain a while longer, but she had another engagement and so was obliged to refuse. Mabel and the Major plied each other with questions until Fred laughingly said he was getting jealous of his attentions to his wife.

"My dear sir," said the Major, "I knew her years before you did. Pon my honor, I did."

"Dear me, Mr. Pemberton, it's time I was leaving. They keep early hours at the Academy. We try to set the boys a good example by retiring early." He wished them all good-night, after promising Mabel to spend every day of his vacation with her and Fred.

"You're too good to me, Mrs. Fairchild. Pon my honor, you are. But as your father's friend, I will accept the hospitality of your home."

"Then we will look for you, Major, as soon as school closes."

"Indeed you can; I shall be proud to visit you."

"Drop us a line when you are coming, and I will have the carriage there to meet you."

"I will, Mr. Fairchild."

All the way home to the Academy the Major was thinking of how surprised and envious they would be of him when he told them he was going to spend his vacation with his friend Fairchild. "It's a pleasure to meet people who appreciate a gentleman. Pon my honor, it is," thought the Major.

At the Academy at breakfast next morning he entertained them with an account of his visit last evening. The boys listened interestedly; it was against the rules for any of them to enter into the conversation at the table. That was the faculty's privilege, not their's. When the boys went out into the grounds, as was the custom, for a run before school hours, they discussed the Major among themselves.

"Say, the prof. will be minus a Latin teacher before long if the Major keeps up visiting millionaires. He'll get too big for us scrubs. That's what's the matter, boys. We will have to go down on bended knees to him."

"I notice," said one of the boys, "his back gets stiffer after each visit." It was a joke among them how rigid the Major always held himself. He never, at least in their presence, relaxed a particle.

The boys were not far out in their surmises, although neither the Major or the professor even suspected it. For, while the Major was discussing his host of the evening before, they were talking about him. Mr. Pemberton was

wondering how it would do to place him in charge of the Home when it was finished.

"We must have some sort of discipline in the management of it, and the Major would be just the one. It would suit him too. There would be no one in authority over him, and I feel we could trust him implicitly. If he would accept it, I would give him a good salary and provide a separate house and grounds for his own use."

"I don't think, father, there is any doubt of his accepting," said Esther, "but you must handle the matter delicately, as he is very proud and sensitive."

The next time the Major called Mr. Pemberton invited him into the library, and conferred with him in private. The Major was quite overcome with Mr. Pemberton's confidence in him.

"Do you really think I would be capable of managing so large an institution?"

"Certainly, Major. I know you can. You have the ability to do it. Of that I am certain."

The Major bowed in recognition of the compliment. After a little palaver, the Major agreed to take the management, Mr. Pemberton being very careful not to mention position. He did not wish to hurt the Major's feelings, the latter being very sensitive on the point of having to stoop to earn a living.

"Well, Major," said Mr. Pemberton, "we can consider the matter settled, I suppose. Your salary would be fully four times as much as you are receiving at the Academy. You will have your own home, with horses and carriage at your disposal and other personal comforts at your command. Anything else you need you shall have."

The Major stammered his thanks. "Mr. Pemberton, your kindness overcomes me; pon my honor, it does. This is more than I could have expected even from my warmest friends."

"Well, Major, I knew by the way you took hold of my advice, to be a man and do something for a living, that there was good stuff in you, if you could conquer your pride."

"Yes, Mr. Pemberton, my confounded pride very nearly brought me to starvation point. But, thanks to you, sir, I can now look at such things in a rational light."

In the morning the faculty at the Academy were thrown into dismay by the news. The professor could eat nothing, he was so shocked. The rest of the teachers cared little about it. The Major had always held himself rather aloof from them, so they were not sorry to hear of his intention to sever his connection, as he said, with the Academy.

The boys felt sorry to hear that this would be his last term. They all liked him in spite of his pompous ways. He was always social and nice with them, and often sat on the lawn after school telling them stories of his school days and army life.

"He isn't savage like some of those drill masters," said one of the boys. "You remember that fellow that cracked Jones over the head with his sword for losing step. My! he had a lump on his head as big as my fist for over a week after. If I had been his father, I'd have made that fellow smart for it; the old coward picking on such a small chap, too."

It was several days before the professor recovered his spirits. The Major's withdrawal was going to be a serious thing for the Academy. His place would be hard to fill. "It was just a chance I ran on to him. I can get inferior men in plenty, but ones of the Major's style are hard to find. He has such a distinguished air about him, and I notice the boys are taking on some of his mannerisms. It's a very unfortunate circumstance that deprives me of his services. I have an idea," thought the professor, brightening up, "maybe he knows of some fellow officer who would take his place at the same remuneration. I'll go and ask him."

But, think as he would, the Major could not recall one of his friends who needed remuneration for their services. He sent in his resignation according to the rules, to take effect at the end of the term.

The boys planned a little surprise for him, and at the end of the term presented him, in the presence of the rest of the teachers, with a handsome sword. The Major thanked them

warmly for their extreme thoughtfulness, and later on presented each boy with his own picture taken in the regimentals of His British Majesty's service.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE HOME IS STARTED.

The architect having everything in readiness, the building was now started. Mr. Pemberton and Tom spent every available moment on the grounds, which were to be improved at the same time the building was going up. The newspapers were full of the proposed Pemberton Home, and of the idea held by Mr. Pemberton of spending his accumulating millions for the betterment of humanity. They urged others to follow his noble example and make the world brighter for the less fortunate.

Applications were being received already, but, as Mr. Pemberton said, it would be eight months at least before they were ready for occupants, it would be no use discriminating yet, for they had nowhere to lodge the applicants, no matter how worthy they were. Esther was intensely interested in the Home. She had always wanted her father to do some charitable work with his surplus wealth, but he had always frowned on her requests, and, worst of all, had absolutely forbidden her to undertake to associate herself in any way with such things. Many a time she was obliged to refuse to help in some worthy cause because of this proviso. But now here he was himself more interested in such things, if possible, than she had been. "I was so afraid he would forget his resolution when he gained his strength," she had said to her mother. "So many of us forget all about our promises when we have gained the end we sought for."

Mrs. Pemberton cared nothing for their foolishness, as she called the Home, and was disgusted with the way the subject was always present.

"It seems to me, Esther, we never hear anything else; even the papers keep talking about it. If it could have been

made into a society event, there might be some sense to it, but just bricks and mortar, lumber and nails every meal. I tell you, I am tired of it all, Esther. I feel like going to visit Mabel and Fred."

"But, mother," laughed Esther, "they are in the midst of such work too. So their table talk would be the same, with the slight variation of reinforced concrete; that's their building material, I believe."

"Why will people that could be so happy, with plenty of money to spend, bother with such things? Why not buy boxes at the opera for their friends, if they want to throw their money away? Esther, I have no patience with you and your father in this Home business. He never acted like this until he had that awful dream; he called it a vision. But the doctor said it was nothing but a bad dream, but it came nearly killing him. But he was all right until then. You never heard him talking such nonsense as he does now."

"Dear mother, you don't understand these things. Some one ought to help the struggling masses."

"I don't care about the struggling masses, Esther," said Mrs. Pemberton, almost in tears.

"Come, mother, let us order the carriage and go calling."

"Now, Esther, you are talking sense; that's just what we will do."

When they were almost ready to start Mrs. Gaye came in. She had been out with her husband to see the location of the Home.

"Isn't it dreadful, Mrs. Pemberton," she said, sitting down, "my husband is getting the craze too. He wants to found some kind of a place for some other kind of women. It isn't scrub women. Oh, now I remember," she said, after hesitating a few moments, "it's sewing women. Yes, that's it. He says they stitch their lives away to dress such frivolous beings as you and I, Mrs. Pemberton, and that we will be held accountable for it in the next world. Did you ever hear such nonsense in your life? What does he know about the next world? My own opinion is, Mrs. Pem-

berton, that the good Lord expects us, as creations of his own hands, to look our best and do justice to his work."

Esther smiled to herself at this new phase of looking at the Creator's work.

"And that is not the worst of it, dear Mrs. Pemberton. You will never dream what your husband and mine were doing out there this morning. They were sitting on a pile of bricks, drawing plans for my husband's freak institution. I don't know what else to call it. A pile of bricks, think of it, Mrs. Pemberton, as if they could not find a softer seat! I honestly believe that they thought that they were sitting on shavings, they paid so little attention to it. All they did was to look up now and then, and nod their heads. I just watched them for the want of something better to do.

"And, Mrs. Seymour, your husband is no better. I saw him with my own eyes run up a ladder and hand a line to a brick mason. What are our husbands coming to? Are we to lose our place in the social world while they amuse themselves with this nonsense?"

"You are alarming yourself unnecessarily, Mrs. Gaye," said Esther. "For my part, I don't care if my husband does hand a line to a brick mason; the latter probably had not the time to leave his work to get it. That's just like Tom, anyway, to be so thoughtful."

"Just listen to that, Mrs. Pemberton; she calls such conduct thoughtful. I call it disgraceful. You are not, surely, going out there now, are you?" she asked. "I see your carriage is waiting."

"We just ordered it to go calling, when you came," said Esther. "You had better come with us. We are not going to the grounds to-day. Mother has no sympathy with father's plans, and does not care to go."

"I would like to go calling with you and your mother, but I look such a fright in this dress, don't I?" she said, as she turned around. "But who knows but what our husbands will be commanding us to wear gingham aprons and sun-bonnets yet, to set these women a good example in simplicity in dress. I think I'll go with you anyway. How's

my hair?" she asked, as she straightened her hat in front of the mantel mirror. "I feel so bad to think my husband has become infected with this charity germ. I suppose it's good-bye to card parties, theatre parties and everything now."

"Father never interferes with mother," said Esther. "She can keep up her social duties just the same, and so do I."

"Mr. Gaye is not like that," said his wife. "If he takes up anything, I've got to be swept into it too, or be scolded everlastingly if I don't. Why, when he took up the fad of collecting old manuscripts he used to make me sit there while he read them aloud to me three or four times, and the smell of those musty old things would make me sick. He would go into raptures over some ragged old edition of some ancient scribe, as he would call them, and, goodness knows, it's bad enough to have our own books get ragged without buying ragged ones."

"Well, mother, if we are going to call, we ought to be starting."

"You're right, Esther. Let us be going before it's too late."

Once in the carriage, Mrs. Gaye and Mrs. Pemberton discussed their tribulations, much to Esther's amusement. They could see all their pleasures curtailed, and all kinds of disasters ahead of them. "Just for nothing but charity," sighed Mrs. Gaye. The carriage here stopped in front of one of the homes they proposed visiting. This ended their conversation temporarily.

At dinner nothing was talked over but the Home. Mr. Pemberton was all enthusiasm.

"It's going to be a great thing for mothers, this Home of ours, Tom, the greatest charity the world has ever known. Why, Eva," he said, turning to his wife, "we have had to enlarge on our plans already."

"Oh, Stanley, don't talk to me about it at all. Mrs. Gaye and I feel so bad over it."

"Why, Eva?"

"We don't know where it will stop."

"Never mind, my dear, your life will never be disturbed

by our schemes. You can flit about among your friends and I will see you want for nothing in the way of pleasure."

"I am so glad, Stanley. You are so good to me. Poor Mrs. Gaye is nearly crazy because her husband is taking it up too. It's all the newspapers' fault for praising your philanthropy. Mrs. Gaye says her husband was perfectly satisfied until he read the account of it. Then he jumped up, she says, and said, 'I must do some good, too, while I am here with my superabundance.'—That's the very word he used, Stanley. I don't see why you could not leave well enough alone, both of you."

"But it's not well enough, Eva; far from it. Some one that has means must better conditions. But I won't bother you, Eva. I know you don't care for such things."

Mrs. Pemberton was glad the subject was dropped. She neither cared for nor understood philanthropy. Esther listened to Tom's glowing accounts of the style of building that they were going to erect, the number of rooms, and the various conveniences attached to them.

"Your father is getting quite a name for himself. They are already quoting his Home as a long needed institution, and advising others to follow his example in doing good with their surplus wealth."

"Yes," said Esther, "it's all so strange. It seems only a few months ago that father was forbidding me to associate myself with such work; now all is changed. He is so absorbed in this proposition that he can hardly leave it long enough to eat."

"Tom," said Mrs. Pemberton, "do you really like doing this thing, or are you just doing it to please my husband?"

"I like it, mother. I never paid much attention to such things until father sent me on a tour of investigation to see how such institutions were conducted. The only thing about it I can't understand is the enormous expense of running such places. Why, some of them, I found, use more money to pay officials than it cost to keep the inmates. There ought to be some remedy for such conditions. I was suggesting to father to let some of the women and children do light outdoor work, such as taking care of the poultry

yards and so forth. It would not only be good for themselves, but a help to the institution. Many people would prefer to help in some way rather than eat the bread of idleness."

"You will never get them to work, Tom, when they can get the same privileges for nothing."

"There would be nothing compulsory about it. Only I have seen people, mother, who could not idle their time, even if they were sick. They had to have something to occupy them. There would be nothing laborious about feeding and attending to poultry, or any young animals. To some the novelty of the thing would appeal. Some of those women would probably prefer being out doors. It was only a suggestion. It occurred to me it might be made to work. But there's time enough yet for that part of it."

The Home was becoming famous, like all undertakings of the rich. It was well advertised by the papers. The middle classes are always interested in the doings of the wealthy magnates. The poorer ones, somehow or another, seem to get so much pleasure in abusing them and rehearsing their shortcomings for every newcomer's benefit. How they acquired their wealth seems to be their special hobby. Naturally, Mr. Pemberton came in for his share of condemnation.

"It's no wonder," said some, "that he wants to get rid of his ill gotten gains. He knows he can't take it with him, and his silly wife would soon spend it all."

"It's good his daughter and her husband have got some sense," said another.

Mr. Pemberton neither knew nor cared about their criticisms. He was too absorbed in his enterprise. Their remarks had never reached his ears. Mrs. Pemberton felt relieved to think she was not expected to take part in the plans, for, as she said, she hated business.

Towards evening Mr. Gaye came in, carrying with him the rough sketches of different ideas he had formed of what kind of an institution he would like to build. Mrs. Gaye and Mrs. Pemberton went off to another room, leaving the rest of them to examine the plans. They talked over their

troubles. Mrs. Gaye told her friend how she had magnified hers considerably on her previous visit.

"When I went home," she said, "I found my husband working on his plans and I made some remark to him, and he was real cross. He told me he was not going to ask my advice on any point. That he would formulate his ideas and hand them to the architect to perfect."

"That will be lovely," said Mrs. Pemberton. "We can enjoy ourselves all we want to. Take a chocolate, dear Mrs. Gaye," she said, as she handed her a box of bon-bons. They sat eating chocolates and talking until Esther came to tell Mrs. Gaye that her husband was waiting for her. They kissed each other good-night, promising to meet down town next afternoon. Mr. Gaye shook hands warmly with Esther. Turning to Tom, he said: "You ought to be proud of your wife, Seymour."

"I am, Mr. Gaye. I consider myself fortunate in having won her."

CHAPTER XL.

THE MAJOR.

The school was closed for vacation, and the Major was at liberty to make his promised visit to the Fairchilds. Mr. Pemberton invited him to stay a few days with him first, so that they could talk over their plans for the management of the Home. "Bring your baggage here, Major. It's hardly worth your while taking rooms for so short a time." The Major, nothing loth, came bag and baggage next morning. He was not going to refuse a chance to live like an epicure.

"You are kindness itself, Mr. Pemberton; pon my honor, you are."

"Don't mention it, Major; the pleasure is all mine."

They talked over the Home. The Major's idea of running the institution was to put it on an army basis. There would be certain rules and regulations that the inmates

must observe; there would be no straggling to meals at all hours.

"At the roll of the drum, every one must appear in the hall and march to the dining room," said the Major.

"But, Major," replied Mr. Pemberton, "it's not men we are going to deal with, but women; sick and worn out mothers. Some of them may not be able to leave their rooms, and others, perhaps, could not fall in and march, like a regiment of soldiers, to their meals. If they were that spry, Major, they would not be admitted to the Home. We must have no severe rules, or they would be worse off than in their own homes."

"Just as you say, of course, Mr. Pemberton, but discipline's the thing. Every man and woman ought to obey their superiors."

"That would be all right in an army, Major," responded Mr. Pemberton, feeling that the Major was going to be too strict. "But I'll not tolerate any severe measures in the Home. These women must be free to get up and retire at their will. The meals will be placed on the table at certain hours, and if they are not able to come to the table, their meals must be served in their rooms. I will have a resident physician. It will be his place to decide such things. Your's, Major, will be the general management of the building."

"Just as you say, Mr. Pemberton; but discipline's the thing."

"Yes; but you never heard of discipline in a hospital, Major, and this Home will be much on the same order."

"You're right, Mr. Pemberton. Pon my honor, you are. I will do just as you say. But you will need some rules."

"Yes; that's true, Major, but they need not be stringent ones."

"Whatever rules I draft, I'll first submit them to your approval, Mr. Pemberton."

"That's correct, Major. It's better we should understand each other at the start. I want no friction in the Home; everything must run smooth, and, above all, every inmate must be treated kindly."

"I am a gentleman, Mr. Pemberton," said the Major, haughtily. "I hope I know how to treat the weaker sex. God forbid that I should deal harshly with my fellow mortals," he said with fervor.

"Well, Major, there is a medium measure. These unfortunate women that I intend to care for are not used to living by rules; their lives have been hard and toilsome, and I want them to have perfect freedom of mind and body. I have every confidence in your ability to regulate the institution. But I wish you to exercise your best judgment, Major."

"I will, Mr. Pemberton. You will have no cause to regret appointing me to take charge of the Home. It's something I know nothing about, but I intend to visit the different charitable institutions and see on what plan they are conducted."

"That would be a good idea, Major. I am particularly anxious that the Home should be perfect in all its appointments, and to be a Home in the broadest sense of the word."

The Major left after a week's visit for Fred's. He was anxious to see their home, as Mabel's father had written to him, telling of her beautiful residence and grounds. They had sent him several views of it, and he had almost persuaded his wife to come across the water and visit them. Fred was there to meet him, and as he drove him through the grounds the Major thought how proud Rodney Lloyd would be of this expansive domain. His daughter could not have fared any better.

"She has a most devoted husband and a palatial home," he wrote to her father later. "You must come over and visit them, and Charles, too. He does not forgive me yet for my beastly treatment of him at Oxford."

Uncle Charles had not invited the Major to visit him, and the latter resented it. He was anxious to see his wife, whom Mabel had told him was very beautiful. Mabel had invited them to meet the Major, but Uncle Charles refused point blank. "I have no wish to meet the scoundrel," he wrote to Fred. So nothing more was said on the matter.

The Major enjoyed the visit to Mabel's luxurious home

and took great comfort in the attentions that were paid to him as their guest. Fred and he enjoyed their game of golf every day, with Dinny for a caddy. The latter did not like the Major.

"He is one of those cheap guys, ma," he said, as he showed her an English penny the Major had given him, after he had carried the sticks around the links twice.

"Sure that's from the old country," said his mother as she looked at it. "It's worth about four cents there, but nothin' here. Bad luck to him. Sure it's stingy, he is."

Fred and the Major inspected the former's building. It was not progressing as rapidly as Mr. Pemberton's, the concrete work taking more time. But the Major thought the general effect was better.

"But," he added, "Mr. Pemberton has the ideal location for his Home. It will be seen all over the country; it has such a grand elevation. The view from it will be superb."

"Mrs. Seymour wrote and told us that you were going to take charge of it, Major," said Fred, "and have your own house and grounds. That will be splendid."

"Yes," answered the Major, "I consider I was very fortunate to meet Mr. Pemberton. Pon my honor, I do."

After he had visited some time, he told Fred he would like to visit New York and neighboring cities and look into the management of such places. Fred suggested that they all go.

"Mabel can visit Aunt Maud while we look around."

"That's a capital idea," said the Major, heartily. "Pon my honor, it is."

The trip was made next day. Aunt Maud greeted them cordially. "This is a delightful surprise," she said. "Mabel and I can have a lovely visit, while you are inspecting the various charitable institutions."

Uncle Charles was not at home, much to Aunt Maud's relief, for he had declared that if the Major dared to cross his threshold he would not know what struck him until he was in the middle of the street. "The unmitigated cur!" he had said, when he heard he was visiting the Pembertons. Aunt Maud had tried to quiet him, but it was use-

less. So she was glad he happened to be absent on business when the Major called. The Major went into ecstasies over Aunt Maud's beauty.

"You certainly do have exquisitely moulded women in this country. Pon my honor you do, both in form and face."

"Of course we do," laughed Fred. "You ought to take one back with you to England, Major. Aunt Maud created quite a sensation among your fellow Britishers." The Major said nothing. He felt rather sore on the subject since the widow used him so cruelly, as he was wont to call it.

After they returned home to Fred's, the Major decided he must go back and establish himself in rooms. "I ought to be on the grounds studying my prospective duties." After a little coaxing they managed to persuade him to remain one week more.

"My visit has been most delightful, Mr. Fairchild; pon my honor it has. I must thank you and your charming wife a thousand times for your hospitality," he said, as he wished them good-bye. His trunks and canes were sent off in the morning. He followed them on the afternoon train.

The Major was invited by Mr. Pemberton to return to the latter's home, but he was obdurate. "My place," he said, "is on the grounds, and there I will remain."

"Well, Major, I have a little question I want to talk over with you. Mr. Gaye and I have arranged a set of rules for your guidance. They will insure order in the Home without restriction on the inmates. We have also changed the management a little. I want everything adjusted to my satisfaction and yours before the Home is open for patients. My daughter suggested, and very wisely, too, I think, that it was not a man's place to superintend so many women. A matron would be more appropriate. So we have chosen a Miss Arnold, a trained nurse, whom we are personally acquainted with. She is a very capable woman."

"Then what would my duties be, Mr. Pemberton?" said the Major, terrified that his easy position was slipping away from him.

"You will have plenty to do, Major, as general manager and overseer of the buildings and grounds. You will also have supervision of the supplies and necessary equipments incidental to the institution. The head steward will attend to the food department. Is this all satisfactory, Major? I want to have everything perfectly understood before you take charge. You know now what is expected of you, don't you, Major?"

"Yes; I do precisely, Mr. Pemberton. As you say, it's better to have a thorough understanding between us."

"Come, Major, drive home with me and have some lunch. We can come back together in the afternoon. I have some little points I want to consult you on."

"Thank you, Mr. Pemberton. You are very kind; pon my honor, you are." During the lunch Mrs. Pemberton inquired how much longer they would be over the building.

"You said about eight months, Stanley, would finish it. They have been that long now."

"Yes, Eva, and it's a long way yet from being finished. Probably two months more will see it ready to open. The furnishings have to be chosen. I am sorry Esther cannot help us to choose them. How would you like to go, Eva, with Miss Arnold. She understands such things, and you love shopping so much," he said, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"I would love to go if Mrs. Gaye could come too."

"Ask her," replied Mr. Pemberton.

As soon as lunch was over and Mr. Pemberton and the Major had driven back to the grounds, Mrs. Pemberton went to see Mrs. Gaye about it. The latter was overjoyed.

"Of course, I'll go, dear Mrs. Pemberton. It will be just grand, won't it? I just love to look at Turkish rugs and beautiful china."

"But Mr. Pemberton was not going to furnish the Home on as luxurious a scale as he did his house."

Mrs. Gaye was disappointed when she found they must wait a few days, as Miss Arnold was called by a physician to help him on a delicate operation. In the meantime she

and Mrs. Pemberton were planning on all the fine things they would buy, intending to add a few for themselves.

"I never could look at all those things and not buy. Could you?" asked Mrs. Gaye.

"No," answered her friend; "it's too tantalizing."

SHOPPING.

The day came for the shopping expedition. Miss Arnold was on hand early, as she knew that it would take the greater part of the day. Mrs. Gaye and Mrs. Pemberton were on the *qui vive* of expectation, and were in readiness by the time the carriage came to the door.

"The first place we had better go will be the furniture store," said Miss Arnold, as she took her seat. They drove to one of the leading ones.

"What are you going to buy first, Miss Arnold?" asked Mrs. Gaye as they entered the store.

"Beds," she answered shortly.

"Beds? What for?"

"To sleep on. Isn't that the usual use they make of them?" said Miss Arnold, walking on.

"She's mean, isn't she?" whispered Mrs. Gaye to her friend.

"They are all like that," whispered back Mrs. Pemberton.

"Oh, here's some lovely ones," said Mrs. Gaye, "burnished brass."

"We are not looking for such expensive luxuries," replied Miss Arnold quietly. "Just plain enameled ones."

"They're pretty, too," said Mrs. Gaye. "You can get them in lovely pastel shades." But Miss Arnold passed right by the colored ones and stopped at the plain white ones.

"You're not going to buy those horrid things, are you?" asked Mrs. Gaye.

"Certainly; these are the kind that are used in such in-

stitutions, pure white. They are better for sanitary purposes, and always look clean and neat."

The beds were soon chosen. The bedding was the next proposition. But Mrs. Pemberton and Mrs. Gaye were disgusted with her taste. All their visions of pretty furnishings were dashed away. When the carpet department was visited, she chose plain, substantial colors for rooms and halls. The furniture for the reception room was the only kind that showed the least sign of luxury.

"Miss Arnold, the place will look hideous with all this kind of furniture."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Pemberton," she replied, "you will find, if you visit them, that most of the charitable institutions are furnished in this manner."

This portion of the shopping being concluded, they drove to the crockery store. Miss Arnold chose heavy white stone china. This was enough for her companions.

"Let us go and leave her," said Mrs. Gaye. "She seems to be death on white. I suppose it represents cleanliness. But I don't admire her taste."

"I think we will leave you, Miss Arnold," said Mrs. Pemberton. "We want to go shopping, and this is an insult to the name." Miss Arnold smiled as they walked out of the store.

Mrs. Pemberton gave the coachman instructions to wait for Miss Arnold. Now that they were alone, they gave vent to their feelings.

"She calls that shopping," said Mrs. Gaye, contemptuously. "I wouldn't go one block to see such furniture."

"Stanley says she has bought the furniture for several hospitals."

"Perhaps she gets it cheap for them," replied Mrs. Gaye. "I never saw such cups as she bought. I should think they would crack their teeth all to pieces on them, wouldn't you, Mrs. Pemberton? And those beds," she continued, giving Mrs. Pemberton no time to reply, "why couldn't she have bought those delicate shades of pink, green and blue? If I were a tired mother, I would rather lie on a pink bed than a white one, wouldn't you, Mrs. Pemberton?"

"Certainly, I would."

"We've just wasted three quarters of an hour for nothing. Let us hurry up town now."

They did so and spent until lunch hour visiting the various millineries. That was Mrs. Gaye's special weakness. She did not buy every time, but liked to try the trimmed hats on just to see the effect, as she told her friend. After lunch they resumed their wandering. Towards three o'clock, just as they were passing the chic café, they discovered that they were hungry again.

"Let us go in here and get some chocolate. I really did not enjoy my lunch. The thought of those awful dishes took away my appetite," said Mrs. Gaye. Mrs. Pemberton said she didn't feel hungry.

"Come in, my dear," urged Mrs. Gaye. "You will feel like having something once you're inside."

They entered and took seats. As they sipped their chocolate and munched eclairs, they talked over their disappointment.

"Call that shopping? Ugh! I call it waste of time, passing by all the fine furniture and taking all those white beds. It makes me almost faint," said Mrs. Gaye. "Don't I look awfully white, Mrs. Pemberton?"

"You really do, my dear; all but the end of your nose, Mrs. Gaye. Just dab a little powder on it and it will be all right." She opened her hand satchel and took out her piece of chamois and gently patted her nose with it.

"Does that look any better?" she asked.

"Yes; it's all right now."

They resumed their conversation and remained talking until the waiter came and turned on the lights.

"My! is it that late?" said Mrs. Pemberton, as she looked at her watch. It had stopped. She shook it vigorously once or twice, but it did not help it.

"What time is it by your watch, Mrs. Gaye? Mine is not going."

"Mine's stopped, too," she laughed, as she looked at it. "It's a good thing my husband isn't here. He says he'd like to know why women carry watches. They are never

going if you ask them the time, and don't amount to any more than a garter buckle." They called the waiter and asked him the time.

"Five o'clock, ma'am."

"Gracious! Have we been sitting here that long?" said Mrs. Gaye.

"We must have. The waiter wouldn't dare to tell a lie. He would lose his place," replied Mrs. Pemberton. "Let us hurry, my dear, or we won't get inside a store."

They settled their bill, tipping the waiter liberally, and hurried to the first large store. They asked to see some silks. The obliging clerk took down bolt after bolt for their inspection. He unfolded them, draped them, and held them at arms length, so that they could see the shimmering folds. They gushed over their beauty.

"That piece is a perfect dream," said Mrs. Gaye, as he unfolded another bolt.

"How many yards are in that piece?" The clerk measured it off.

"Just sixteen yards, ma'am," he responded.

"You would not have thought there was so much in that piece. It did not look like it," she said, turning to Mrs. Pemberton.

"How much did you want?" asked the clerk.

"We didn't want any," laughed Mrs. Gaye. "We are just looking around."

"Oh, there's Miss Arnold," said Mrs. Pemberton, excitedly. "Let's go and see what she is doing in here."

Off they went, leaving the clerk still holding the piece of silk. "Well, I'll be bothered, if that's not the limit," he said as he started to fold the silk up again. "I think I'll go and be a blacksmith. You would have a chance to swear then if you wanted to; here it's against the rules. Why, I don't know. It seems it's needed here worse than in any place I know of."

Miss Arnold was surprised to see them. She thought they had gone home long before now.

"It was too bad you were in such a hurry," she said to them. "I have chosen some very artistic furniture for the

Major's house. Mr. Pemberton directed me to spare no expense on it."

"Why didn't you tell us you were going to buy it?"

"You never gave me a chance."

"What are you going to buy here, Miss Arnold?" asked Mrs. Gaye.

"Towels."

"Towels!" said Mrs. Gaye.

"Certainly; they are a necessity, if anything is."

"Will they be white?"

"Most assuredly."

"Then I don't think we will bother going with you, Miss Arnold."

"Doesn't she love white," said Mrs. Pemberton. "But, of course, one has to have white towels, you know."

"But wasn't it mean of her," said Mrs. Gaye, "not to tell us about the Major's furniture?"

"That's what I think, too. I wonder if the carriage is outside. Let us go and see." But it was not there. When Mrs. Pemberton and Mrs. Gaye deserted Miss Arnold, she ordered the carriage taken home.

"It's useless your waiting for me," she told the coachman. "I may be all day buying." So he gladly turned his horses homeward.

They walked along leisurely, looking into the windows as they went along. Soon the stores began to close; so they decided to take the car and go home.

They found Mr. Pemberton and Mr. Gaye busily engaged over some intended improvement.

"Well," asked Mr. Pemberton, "how did the shopping go?"

"Fine," replied his wife.

"How many beds did Miss Arnold buy?" inquired Mr. Gaye of his wife.

"I don't know," she answered.

"Do you, Mrs. Pemberton?"

"It was this way, Mr. Gaye; it grew so tiresome that we left Miss Arnold and went shopping alone."

"She will soon be here," said his wife. "She was buying

towels when we last saw her, white ones." Her husband glowered at her.

"Did you expect her to buy purple ones?" he said sarcastically. She made no answer. Mrs. Pemberton motioned to her to come out of the room.

"He's so hateful, isn't he?" she said as soon as they were in the hall.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Gaye. "He's just as hateful as hateful can be."

They went up stairs and removed their wraps, as Mr. Pemberton had invited Mr. Gaye to dinner, and prepared themselves for the meal. Miss Arnold came in in the meantime and gave the bills, together with the list of goods she had purchased, to Mr. Pemberton. He invited her to dine with them, but she gave some excuse and went home.

When Mrs. Pemberton and Mrs. Gaye returned they found their husbands studying the bills. Mr. Gaye looked up as they came into the room, saying to his wife, "There were two hundred beds purchased for the present."

"There did not look as if there were that many in the store," she replied.

"Do you suppose that they would keep that quantity in the store and leave no room to display the rest of their goods?" he said to her sharply. "You had better be a little more observant of such things. By observation is where we get the best of our education," he roared. Mrs. Gaye made no answer; her lips quivered; Mrs. Pemberton handed her her smelling salts.

"Sniff that, my dear," she said. "It's very reviving."

"I don't want to revive; I want to die," she said tearfully. "He is so mean to me." Mr. Gaye paid no attention, but went on reviewing the bills with Mr. Pemberton.

Dinner was announced. They walked to the dining room, where under the influence of the meal Mrs. Gaye recovered her spirits. After dinner Mr. Pemberton and Mr. Gaye resumed their business, while their wives talked over their shopping tour.

"Why, the whole day was wasted," said Mrs. Gaye. "Neither of us bought a single article."

"I know it," answered Mrs. Pemberton. "We had no right to be inveigled into it. Stanley should not have asked me to go."

"We are too easily led, Mrs. Pemberton," replied Mrs. Gaye. "We must be more firm and learn to say no. I don't care for Miss Arnold's style of shopping, anyway. She just goes in and buys. I'd like to know where she gets any fun out of it. I couldn't," said Mrs. Gaye. "I wonder if she had any lunch," said Mrs. Pemberton, with concern.

"Don't worry, my dear. She's had a good dinner, probably at your husband's expense. Trust those quiet, methodical people for neglecting their stomach."

"I hope she did. Stanley would feel terrible if he thought we never asked her to come and have dinner with us."

They talked until Mr. Gaye came into the room and notified his wife that it was time they were getting home. After they had gone, Mr. Pemberton sat on the lounge with his wife and listened to her account of how they spent the day.

"Stanley," she said, "don't you think Mr. Gaye is awfully cross to her?"

"Yes, Eva, just a little bit too harsh, I think. She certainly does try his patience with her foolish questions; but for all that, she is a good woman and very kind hearted. We ought all to learn to overlook other people's faults and only search for their good qualities as we go through life.

"Come, Eva, you look tired. Let us retire. Don't you want to come with me to-morrow and see the building?" he asked, as they went up stairs. "It's getting where it makes quite a show."

"Yes, Stanley, I'd like to go."

"That sounds good, Eva. I was afraid you were not going to be interested in it."

"I am now," she replied. "Whatever interests you, Stanley, is going to interest me."

He bent over and kissed her, saying, "You don't know how happy your words have made me, Eva. I want you to help me and encourage me in this work I have undertaken."

"I will," she replied.

CHAPTER XLII.

MRS. PEMBERTON BECOMES INTERESTED IN THE HOME.

As Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton drove off next morning to see the Home, they were in excellent spirits.

"Eva," he said, "I wish you would come with me every day."

"I would like to, Stanley, but you know I don't care for nor understand business. I am afraid you would get tired of me. But I'm not like Mrs. Gaye, forever asking foolish questions."

"No, Eva, I would not get tired of you. I like companionship and feel lost without Esther. It does me good to have you here by my side, and it's less fatiguing to you, I am sure, than shopping."

"Oh, Stanley, don't, please. That trip was awful. I never was so tired in my life. Mrs. Gaye just dragged me here, there and everywhere. And you know, Stanley, I have no will of my own. I just follow where she leads."

"Poor Eva," he said tenderly, "you were always like that. I believe even now you would follow me like you used to do when we were first married. Do you remember how you always came to meet me?"

"Yes, Stanley, I do. There were no houses then, and no one to watch me. Now it's all so different; every place is built up, and we can only see out in front of us."

"Some day we will all go and stay at Tom and Esther's country home. How would you like that?"

"It would be too quiet for me, Stanley."

"Not when you grew accustomed to it, Eva. But here we are at the grounds, and there's Tom."

The latter assisted Mrs. Pemberton out of the carriage and took her to the building, while Mr. Pemberton talked with the architect.

"Would you like to look over the building, mother?" Tom asked.

"They are putting in the furniture, already! Why, they only bought it yesterday!"

"I know it," answered Tom, "but these are the days of rush and bustle. Every one seems to be afraid there will be no to-morrow to do anything."

Mrs. Pemberton went through the first floor with Tom, who took special pains to show her everything. On going up stairs to view the second floor, they met Miss Arnold, who was superintending the placing of the furniture.

"Good morning, Mrs. Pemberton!" she said. "I am glad you are here. Wouldn't you like to look at the bedrooms, now that they are furnished? You will find they don't look as hideous as Mrs. Gaye thought they would with white beds." Mrs. Pemberton and Tom followed her to the rooms.

"They certainly do look clean and inviting," said Tom. "I think some of those poor mothers will enjoy such a pleasant home to rest themselves in. The halls, too, look home-like."

"That carpet looks better here than it did in the store, Miss Arnold," said Mrs. Pemberton.

"Yes, it does; it harmonizes so nicely with the wood-work."

They went on to the third story.

"This is really a children's playroom," said Tom.

"Won't they play outdoors?" asked Mrs. Pemberton. "I heard my husband say, 'Let them roll in the grass and kick up their heels.'"

"Yes, that's true," said Tom. "There's to be no restrictions of any kind with the children. But when it rains, we want some place for their energetic little bodies to exercise. It's not natural for a healthy child to sit still. There are some swings of all sorts, see-saws, hobby-horses, and every kind of contrivance to amuse the children. We will keep an attendant with them always, whether indoors or outside, for the best of children will quarrel. They need a grown person to settle their disputes for them."

"Why, Tom, I had no idea it was so nicely arranged, and it's all so neat and clean looking."

"Come here, mother, and see the view," he said as he led her out onto the balcony.

"Isn't that lovely! No one ought to stay sick long here."

"And see at this end is a glass enclosed sun parlor, for there are some people who cannot stand the least breeze."

"Well, Eva," said Mr. Pemberton, coming out, "how do you like it? I was following you up, but lost you somewhere?"

"We have been in the children's playroom, Stanley."

"It's beautiful, is it not? That's a scheme of Tom's to finish up the whole third floor into one large room for their comfort."

They all sat on the balcony enjoying the magnificent view. They could see the walks and drives plainly as they looked down.

"You will have to excuse me, Mrs. Pemberton," said Miss Arnold. "I have to go to Major Temple's house and see that the furniture is arranged to suit his taste."

As she went off Mr. Pemberton said, "Miss Arnold has been a wonderful help to us, Tom. She understands everything connected with such institutions, and goes about it all in such a systematic manner. It's finished before you realize it's begun. The architect tells me that she was here early this morning to meet the furniture men and had them put down the carpets and get the beds into place. We must go later on and see the Major's house. You will like his rooms. They are furnished so prettily."

Mrs. Pemberton was enjoying the novelty of it all. She had not been to see the building since it was first started, and was surprised at the progress they had made.

"How soon will you be able to take in your patients?" asked Tom.

"Not for a month yet. There are several things yet in the line of finishing up to be done. The physician says the paint ought to be thoroughly dry and every vestige of the odor of it and the varnish out of the building before we throw it open to the public."

"I don't doubt but what he is right," replied Tom, "but a month seems a long time."

“The finishing work will take three or four weeks yet,” said Mr. Pemberton.

“I am too eager to see it opened; that’s what’s the matter with me,” laughed Tom.

“I think we might just as well go to the Major’s now,” said Mr. Pemberton.

The Major saw them approaching as they walked over to his house, and advanced to meet them. He shook hands heartily with Mrs. Pemberton.

“This is, indeed, a pleasure,” he said, as he took her hand. “Pon my honor, it is. Don’t you think everything is looking splendid?”

“Indeed, I do, Major. I had no idea that the building was so large.”

“It is large,” replied the Major, “and very complete. I never saw a better arranged institution in my life. Pon my honor, I never did. But let me conduct you to my quarters; they will surprise you. They are nobby in the extreme. Just fancy my sitting down on such luxurious chairs,” he said, as he invited them in, “and such rugs! The Sultan of Turkey has no better, I’ll wager,” he said proudly.

“This table is a little gem,” said Mrs. Pemberton.

“Isn’t it though?” replied the Major. “Miss Arnold showed the taste of an artist in the choice of furniture for my dwelling and also in the arranging. It’s all her work. I must thank her for it. Pon my honor, I must.”

Mr. Pemberton had ordered lunch at one of the nearby houses. So they repaired there to partake of it.

“Where’s the Major, Tom?” asked Mr. Pemberton.

“He has disappeared.”

“Go and find him, and tell him I wish the pleasure of his company at lunch. Find Miss Arnold too and bring her with him. I am getting suspicious of the Major’s attentions to Miss Arnold. They are getting rather pointed.”

“Do you think he intends to marry her?” asked Mrs. Pemberton.

“I don’t know. It may only be his way of treating women in general. But he certainly does pay her considerable attention. They would be a well matched pair; they are both

so systematic about everything they undertake. He admires her, I know, for he has told me so several times. But admiration and love are two different things. It may develop into something more serious later on. But here they are. Come, let us go in to lunch."

The meal was very good, and every one seemed to be in the best of spirits, the Major being particularly so. After lunch Tom returned home, but Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton stayed until late in the afternoon.

"This has been a most delightful day to me, Eva."

"So it has been to me, Stanley. I think I will come with you again to-morrow."

"Do, my dear. It makes it so pleasant for me to have your company, and it's really not so bad out here."

"It's lovely, I think. You could not have chosen a prettier place, Stanley."

Mr. and Mrs. Gaye had called and found the Pembertons gone.

"Where can they be?" the latter asked her husband.

"Out to the building, I suppose," he answered. "I think I'll go there myself to-morrow. I am anxious to get mine started, but there seems to be so much delay about the land. I hate this dilly-dallying," he said crossly. "If a man wants to sell, why can't he say so and not be changing his mind every few days? I wouldn't waste time on him, only it's just the place I want. If it were not so late, I'd drive out there. But the Pembertons would probably be on their way home by now."

Mrs. Gaye was very disappointed. She had so much to tell her friend.

"What will we do?" asked Mr. Gaye.

"Go home, I suppose," she answered.

"Go home?" he roared, "after putting the coachman to the trouble of getting himself and the carriage ready. Why it's only four minutes since we left there," he said, looking at his watch.

"Drive to the park," he ordered. They took their seats and the coachman drove there. At the entrance they fol-

lowed the stream of autos and carriages into the park. They drove past the well kept lawns and flower beds, neither of them enjoying it a particle, she too frightened, and he too cross to talk. He envied the laborers their happy faces as they hauled the wet hose over the ground.

"Everybody seems to be happy but us. We seem to be naturally antagonistic to each other. The worst side of me is always out when I am with my wife, and I know she is a great deal pleasanter to other people than she is to me," he thought. He turned to make a remark and found his wife nodding sleepily.

"Madam!" he rasped, "can't you keep awake even in my company?"

"Oh, was I sleeping?" she said with a start.

"You were sleeping. You are a most delightful companion, I must say."

He called to the coachman to take them home. When they were almost home they met the Pembertons returning from the grounds. Their happy faces only made him feel worse. They nodded gaily to him as he passed.

"Poor Gaye," said Mr. Pemberton, "he is very unhappy. His wife is no companion for a man of his intellect. I never saw a man age like he has in the last year," said Mr. Pemberton.

When Tom returned home he told Esther of the interest her mother took in the Home.

"You ought to have seen her face! It was all smiles! And father was happy, too, because of her company."

"She would be a great deal better off, Tom, if she would go out more with father and leave Mrs. Gaye alone. She is the silliest woman I ever met. I should think her husband would go insane."

"He is pretty near there now," replied Tom. "He is getting crosser and more crabbed every day. There was a time when he was as pleasant a man as I ever met."

"Here are father and mother coming now." Tom ran down the steps and helped them out.

"How is Esther, Tom?" asked Mr. Pemberton.

"Fairly good," he replied.

Mrs. Pemberton hurried into the house, eager to tell Esther all about the building.

"It's splendid!" she said, enthusiastically. "I have had such a lovely day. I'm going again to-morrow," she said, smiling.

Mr. Pemberton came into the room, kissed Esther affectionately, and he, too, told of how fine everything was looking.

"I never saw your mother take such interest in any of my ventures before. It really pleased me so. I'm happy yet," he said, laughing.

"And she's going with you again to-morrow, she says."

"Yes; of her own free will, too."

"I am positive now that if she saw less of Mrs. Gaye, she would be a different woman. I have said that all along, father."

"I know you have, Esther."

CHAPTER XLIII.

REJOICING.

The Pemberton household was thrown into the greatest excitement. An heir was born to the Seymours. Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton were exulting in their first grandchild. There never was such a child. No boy ever showed such promise as this one did. Mr. Pemberton gazed lovingly at it. Mrs. Pemberton shed some tears at first, but gradually grew to love it too.

"Oh, to think," she said, weeping, "that I am a grandmother!" when they informed her of the event. "I didn't want to be a grandmother."

"Why, Eva?" her husband said. "It's the crowning event of our lives. We will grow young again in the enjoyment of our grandson. Just think of it—our Esther's boy!"

"I know all that, Stanley, but I won't be called grandmother."

"Oh, yes, you will, Eva; you will be proud of the name, and of the grandson too.

"Look at Tom," he said, laughing, as the former held his little son. "Was there ever such a child born as his? He holds it as if it were the most precious thing in the world."

"It is, father," replied Tom. "I wouldn't take the world and all that's in it for one of its dimpled toes. No, sir; that's the greatest treasure that ever came into my possession."

Here the treasure screamed lustily. The nurse took it gently from him and laid it beside its mother, who gazed at it in rapt wonder and admiration. To her it was the sweetest morsel of humanity she ever saw.

Tom and Esther were the happiest couple extant. Their wish had been granted, a son was born to them, and now their cup of happiness was full to overflowing. Mr. Pemberton took so many trips to the room to admire his grandson that the nurse laughingly suggested he remain there all the time. "It would save opening and closing the door so often."

He bent lovingly over Esther. "How are you, my dear?" he asked.

"Oh, so happy, father."

"We all are, Esther. I have been down town already and placed some securities aside for him."

"Oh, father," smiled Esther, "you are going to spoil him."

"Never mind, my dear, the tike shall have all he wants. "Where is he?" he said, as he raised the cover to look at him for the tenth time that morning.

After admiring him some time he said, "Esther, whom do you think he favors?"

"You, father, most decidedly."

"Ha! ha! great joke that," laughed Mr. Pemberton. "Tom actually believes he looks like him, and your mother thinks his eyes will be like hers."

"All I claim," said Esther, "is the hair."

"He seems to be pretty evenly divided in favoring us all," said her father, as he took another look at "the little rascal," as he affectionately called him.

"I never saw a grandfather so pleased over a grandchild before; he seems to think it's perfect, and it is a beautiful child," said the nurse. "He will be a handsome boy, Mrs. Seymour."

"That's what every one says," replied Esther.

Congratulations were pouring in on all sides. Esther's friends all knew this was a welcome baby, and there was no need of glossing over their congratulations with a veneer of pity. This child had its heritage, if any one had; its right to be well born.

None of the Pembertons had been near the building for over three weeks. This alarmed the Major; he could not believe that such a thing as an infant, as he called all babies, was the cause of it. He spoke to Miss Arnold several times about it, but she assured him over and over again that it was only the grandchild that kept them away. The Major was dubious about it, so decided he would call and find out.

"Why, Mr. Pemberton," he said, as he entered the room, "I could not imagine for the life of me what had become of you and your family. You have not been near the building for over three weeks."

"Why should we, Major? We have a much stronger attachment here at home." He rang for the nurse.

"What is it, sir?" she asked as she responded to the call.

"Bring the boy; I want my friend, Major Temple, to see him."

When she returned with him Mr. Pemberton lifted the covering and showed him to the Major.

"What do you think of that?" he said proudly. "Did you ever see a boy of his age as large as that? He is an extraordinary child, Major; just three weeks old the day before yesterday. He beats anything I ever saw," said Mr. Pemberton, importantly.

"Well, aw, that is, Mr. Pemberton, aw, well, I really am no judge of infants," stammered the Major. "Truth is I never owned one."

"Then you've missed half your life, Major. I'd rather

be grandfather to that little tike than King of England." The Major could not understand it.

"A little mite like that," he thought, "turning all their heads," as he told Miss Arnold.

"When will you feel you can tear yourself away from this infant?" he asked.

"There's no tearing about it," replied Mr. Pemberton. "He is going to come, too, just as soon as his mother is able to stand the trip."

"You astonish me, Mr. Pemberton, a man of your intelligence raving like that over a mere infant."

"Ha! it takes an intelligent man to appreciate a child. Wait until you are a grandfather, Major; then you will know what you are talking about. At present you are in dense ignorance."

"The possibility is too remote for me to think about," responded the Major. "But I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Pemberton, as soon as your grandson gets on his feet, train him for the army—discipline, the thing every boy needs."

"Army be jiggered," said Mr. Pemberton, "that boy's going to be no soldier."

"Where is Mrs. Pemberton?" asked the Major, ignoring Mr. Pemberton's remarks, which he considered an insult to the army.

"She's upstairs with her grandson, and Mr. Seymour's up there too."

"Good gracious, Mr. Pemberton, do all parents and grandparents have these ecstatic feelings over the advent of an infant?"

"If they don't, they ought to," answered Mr. Pemberton. "A person would have no feelings of any kind, sir, if he could look on a child and not be moved with some emotion."

"I never heard of such a thing," said the Major. "Pon my honor, I never did. It's far beyond my comprehension."

"So I see," replied Mr. Pemberton.

"I would like to see Mr. Seymour a few moments," said the Major. "Miss Arnold wants some help in her department, and requested me to ask him about it."

"I'll send him to you," said Mr. Pemberton, glad of an excuse to return to his grandson.

Tom ran down stairs and greeted the Major heartily.

"I suppose, Mr. Seymour, I ought to congratulate you. I believe that is what they do on such occasions," remarked the Major.

"Thank you," answered Tom. "What do you think of my son?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"Well, really, Mr. Seymour, as I was telling your father-in-law, I am not much of a judge of infants, but I understand he is large for his age." Tom laughed.

"Major, you are all at sea on such subjects, are you not?"

"Yes, I would rather talk business."

"Or army," put in Tom, slyly.

"You're right, Mr. Seymour. Pon my honor, you are."

Tom and the Major talked business for some time.

"When can I look for you out on the grounds, Mr. Seymour?"

"I can hardly say, Major, probably in a week from now."

"Can't you come before that?"

"No, Major, I don't believe I can; at least, I don't care to. There's nothing urgent, is there?"

"No, Mr. Seymour, not specially, but the architect is anxious to turn the building over to Mr. Pemberton, and wants him or you to inspect it, and see if everything is satisfactory."

"Could you not do it, Major? But wait, I'll ask Mr. Pemberton."

Tom consulted him, and he sent word to the Major that he would be out in the morning. The Major rose to go, but Tom persuaded him to remain to dinner, which he gladly did. During the meal Mr. Pemberton entertained him with his grandson's wonderful observation.

"You would hardly credit it, but that boy watches me all the time. It's marvellous in a child so young. To think of him observing me so quickly. Most children at his age are in what you might term "a dormant state." "Isn't that so, Major?" But the Major pleaded utter ignorance on the subject.

In the morning Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton went out to the grounds to confer with the architect and inspect the buildings. He took the Major and Miss Arnold with them. After he looked it over himself, he instructed them to make a more careful examination, and report to him the following morning. If everything was satisfactory, he would accept the building. He was anxious to get back, so leaving the Major and Miss Arnold to continue the inspection, he and his wife drove home.

"I don't think there is a fault to be found in the Home. If some poor mother is not made happy, it will not be my fault," he said. "I must hand the list of applicants to the Major. He and the physician can attend to that."

On arriving home, they found Tom busily engaged in admiring a handsome silver set which his uncle and aunt had sent for his son. Esther was reading Aunt Amelia's letter. "She considers herself almost a grandmother to our child," she writes, "Tom being as near to her as a son of her own would have been."

"Dear Aunt Amelia," said Esther, "how she will love Tom's boy." Mrs. Pemberton watched her grandson interestedly, much to her husband's delight.

"I knew she could not resist his baby ways very long. No one could," he thought, looking towards the crib.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MR. AND MRS. GAYE.

The Gayes had been the first to call and congratulate Tom and Esther. Mrs. Gaye took very little interest in the new arrival. "I hate children," she said, "but, of course, one has to pretend to admire them, or the parents will feel hurt." She knew every one else would call, and it would not look well if she did not. She gave a casual glance at the child for form's sake, but not enough to know what it looked like. Mr. Pemberton called her attention to its "cute little ways," as he called them. She looked extremely

bored as she glanced again at it, but the rest of his remarks fell on closed ears.

"Any kind of children, large or small," she said, she disliked. "Other people can rave all they want over children, but preserve me from any," she had told a friend.

When her husband suggested that they walk over and see the Seymours' son, she went only because she was afraid to refuse. Mrs. Pemberton was so absorbed with the baby that Mrs. Gaye found her very poor company, so after a few commonplace remarks she insisted on going home.

"It's astonishing, isn't it," she said to her husband on returning home, "how people will fuss over a baby? I never could see anything in their little red faces. I can't bear to be around them. Did you notice how Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton just beamed every time they looked at it? I can't, for the life of me, see anything to admire in a baby."

"Of course, you can't," answered Mr. Gaye. "You haven't any more heart or feeling than a cobblestone. Think how different our home might have been but for you. Our house could have been a happy home, filled with the laughter of romping children, instead of four dead walls."

"There is no sense in talking that way," replied Mrs. Gaye.

"I suppose not; it's too late now. You, Madam, have ruined my life. You have made me what I am," he said bitterly. "But for you I would have known what it was to have a child prattling at my knee, a child to come to me with its toys to be mended, or its bumps to be kissed away. I have been cheated out of my inheritance by you," he said severely. "To be called by the loving name of 'father' has been my secret ambition. I have longed for childish voices in my home, but all this has been denied me by you."

"Don't talk that way," replied Mrs. Gaye. "You would not have any patience with children, and I'm certain I don't want any around me, scratching up the furniture and dragging dust all over the rugs."

"Furniture and rugs don't constitute a home. I would rather see every piece of furniture scratched and shabby, and would love the little fingers that did it. I envy the Pembertons their daughter and grandson. Oh, why could I not have had a little one to watch over and love? To see its little mind unfolding day by day, to listen to its puzzling questions on things that were beyond my ken, and to marvel at its understanding of perplexing subjects. A pair of little loving arms to coil around my neck, a soft little face to lie against mine, a tired little body to fold in my arms, and hold to my heart—a child that was all my own.

"You, Madam," he said bitterly, "have denied me all this. I would not be the man I am to-day but for you. Once I was congenial like my fellow beings; now I am a cynic."

"You need not blame me for your life miseries. You've just got a horrid temper, that's all. You blame everything on me. I wish I never saw you."

"I can echo that wish, God knows," replied Mr. Gaye.

"You care nothing for my feelings," he continued. "You have none yourself and consequently can't understand them in others."

"I don't want to listen to such talk," said Mrs. Gaye, angrily. "You are always regretting the fact that you have no children about you. I have told you often enough that I hate children. They only disturb the household. You never can keep a servant. The first question they ask is: 'Have you any children, and how many?' You know as well as I do that children are obsolete."

"I don't care what you say, Madam; they are obsolete only in such lives as yours. What do you know about the sacred mysteries of motherhood? To you it means nothing, absolutely nothing," he said fiercely. "Such women as Mrs. Seymour understand the significance of it. Look at the happiness that has entered into their home in the form of a little child. Even Mrs. Pemberton, whom I always regarded as a shallow, frivolous woman, has felt the better impulses a child calls up in one. Did you see how earnestly she watched the little one's movements?"

"I never looked at the little one, as you call it," said his wife.

"Are you so devoid of all the attributes of a mother that you can be blind to a child's attractive ways, that you will not even look at one? God has placed a soul in those little bodies, and charged us to care for and love them. You have shirked your God-given duty and spoiled my life," he said, and he dropped his head on the table and shed bitter tears. Mrs. Gaye looked at him in amazement. This man who had always appeared to the outside world hard and cynical, shedding tears.

"If you are going to rave like this," she said, "I'll not go near the Pembertons again, if this is what I have to go through every time."

She walked out of the room, leaving him to shed his tears alone. He raised his head and looked after her. "I wonder if many men have made the mistake I did marrying after a short acquaintance of two weeks, and spend all their life repenting it. But vain repinings will not bring back the past," he said, sighing. "It's here to stay, and I, like many others, will have to bear it to the end."

He remained alone until the evening meal was announced. Mrs. Gaye did not appear. She pleaded headache, and so he ate his lonely meal, with only his rebellious thoughts for company. But it was not the first time he had to eat alone; it was a common occurrence with this mis-mated couple. He fell back on his scientific books, as he always did when worried, and read until midnight. His wife kept her room, determined to keep out of his way until his "spell," as she called it, was over.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE HOME IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

The Home was carefully inspected by the Major and Miss Arnold. Everything being perfectly satisfactory, the Major reported it so to Mr. Pemberton.

"You can tell the architect," said the latter, "that I am more than pleased with his work. Now we can attend to the applicants. You can instruct the physician to examine them for admittance."

"I would like to make a suggestion, Mr. Pemberton," said the Major. "Your wife asked me some time ago if there would be a grand public opening. At the time I thought very little about it, but now the idea presents itself in a different light. I really think it would be in keeping with your position as philanthropist and public benefactor to make it a 'gala' day. Let us have several military bands, a substantial lunch, and invite the public to spend the day with us. The Home has been so much talked about that every one is anxious to see it. After it is in running order, we must have our regular visitors' day," said the Major. "Pon my honor, we must. Now, Mr. Pemberton, the thing is to decide on what day it shall be thrown open to the public."

"That depends entirely on my daughter," replied Mr. Pemberton. "I will consult her and let you know to-morrow morning, Major." After the Major left, Mr. Pemberton went up stairs to Esther and told her of the Major's idea.

"I think he is right, father," she said. "People always like to view new buildings and investigate new enterprises. Another thing," she continued, "it will give them a better idea of its work."

"Would you be able to attend if we named some day next week, Esther?"

"Indeed, I would, father. I am anxious to get out again. I have not seen the Home for an age."

"Then I had better tell the Major and Miss Arnold to go ahead and arrange a program and attend to the providing of the lunch."

Mr. Pemberton left next morning after breakfast to see the Major, who met him as he entered the grounds.

"Ah, Mr. Pemberton," he said, "this will be a great day for every one. This Home will be talked about on more

than one continent. You will be praised and lauded everywhere for the benefits you have conferred on mankind."

"Womankind," corrected Mr. Pemberton.

"Yes, yes, I let my feelings run away with me. Pon my honor, I did, and made that slip, a *lapsus linguae*, so to speak. Ha! ha! great joke that! Isn't it, Mr. Pemberton?"

"Now, Major, remember, you and Miss Arnold have sole charge of everything. I am going to depend entirely on you, and leave everything to your supervision. Spare no expense to make the opening a success. I must be returning home. I promised to be back in time for lunch."

"How is your grandson?" asked the Major, diplomatically.

"Growing like a weed," answered Mr. Pemberton, enthusiastically. "He is the brightest boy I ever saw."

"I don't doubt it," replied the Major, "pon my honor, I don't. With such parentage it would be an extraordinary thing to have it otherwise. Your daughter and her husband have both remarkably fine minds, and what is more natural than that the infant should inherit those traits?"

"Certainly, Major; you've seen enough of human nature to believe in hereditary influences, haven't you?"

"I have, Mr. Pemberton."

"In these days it's getting customary to scoff at such ideas, but blood will tell," said Mr. Pemberton, with emphasis. "And take my word for it, Major, the best blood in the country is in my grandson. I am proud of my ancestry, and prouder still of Mr. Seymour's."

Wednesday of the next week was chosen for the "gala day," as the Major expressed it.

The building was decorated from cellar to roof with gay bunting and streamers. Temporary seats and tables were erected on the grounds. At ten A. M. the bands struck up lively airs, at the Major's orders. "This is not a day for classics," he told them.

The reporters were on the ground early with their cameras and kodaks, taking views of the interior and exterior of the Home. They took photos of the Major and Miss Arnold in all sorts of positions. The Major was in his

glory. He loved to command and to be the head of everything. This just suited him. His tall, erect figure could be seen everywhere. He welcomed the guests of every degree with a suavity that was amusing.

Miss Arnold was besieged with reporters asking questions; the cost of the building, number of inmates it would accommodate, cost of running expenses, salaries paid to each person employed, from the Major down. At last in self-defence she put her hands over her ears. "Not another question will I answer," she said. "Go to the Major. Here he comes."

They deserted her immediately and overwhelmed the Major with rapid inquiries about the building. He told them everything, even to the minutest detail, but they were still dissatisfied and asked to be shown his own quarters. He consented and led the way. They followed him like a pack of hounds to the door. The Major was getting provoked and turned to them and said, "You are the most inquisitive lot of men I ever met. Pon my honor, you are."

"Don't take offence, Major. We are just doing this for the papers we represent. Personally none of us care a rap how you live or what kind of furniture you have in your house. It's the public that wants to know. The insatiate public demands it." The Major looked surprised.

"You tell me you are doing this for the public; almost tearing the clothes off my back for the public. Look at my coat," he said, as he displayed the loose buttons. "I had that buttoned on me neatly this morning, in true military style, and kept it so until one hour ago. Now look at it. With you pulling on one side and another one of you pulling in the opposite direction, you have loosened every button. It's outrageous to treat a gentleman so, 'pon my honor, it is."

"Never mind, Major, we are awfully sorry to have handled you so roughly, but, by George, we will give you a good puff, won't we, boys? Here's three cheers and a tiger for Major Temple."

They gave it lustily, thereby appeasing the Major's wrath. They talked a few minutes longer to him, but were

suddenly stopped by hearing rousing cheers. The Pemberton family had arrived, followed by lines of carriages and autos containing their friends. Mabel and Fred had arrived on the early train. The latter was anxious to examine the building.

Mr. Pemberton was conducted to the platform that the Major had erected in front of the building.

"The public will want to see you and hear you speak on this project of yours."

"You can explain it to them better than I could," urged the Major, when Mr. Pemberton suggested that *he* do the talking.

The family, together with the visitors, ascended the platform amidst continued cheering. After they were seated and all quiet, Mr. Pemberton advanced to the front and explained his ideas to the multitude. When he had finished some one called for three cheers for Mr. Pemberton, the philanthropist. It was given with a gusto. He bowed his acknowledgments to the assembled crowd and, pointing to his grandson, who was sleeping in his nurse's arms, said, "Here is the coming philanthropist who will carry out the work I have begun."

This caused a tremendous outburst of cheers and hurrahs. Mr. Fairchild was called for. He made a neat little speech outlining the work Mr. Pemberton proposed to carry out and briefly stated the object of the building he was putting up. The Major whispered to him, and he asked them all in Mr. Pemberton's name to partake of lunch, "which the Major assures me is already on the tables, and which he wishes you all to enjoy."

The band struck up "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and the living mass thronged toward the tables. Esther and the nurse retired to the Major's house to rest, while Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton, Fred, Mabel and Tom saw that the guests fared well.

This was a great day. The sun shone in all its glory, the birds sang merrily, and all nature seemed to unite in making the opening a success. Mr. Pemberton was happier than he had been in years—happy because he was making

others happy. His wife remained proudly by his side all day, much to his secret amusement. It was only since the birth of Esther's son that she kept so close to her husband. For years she paid little or no attention to his interests, and he had hard work to keep her long enough in his company to talk over ordinary topics, but now, of her own option, she remained with him every day.

Mrs. Gaye was disgusted with her. "Just as I have always said," she remarked to her husband, "children spoil everything. Until this one came Mrs. Pemberton and I had such lovely times together; now I can't even get her to come down town with me. It's always that baby or her husband now. If it were not so funny, I'd actually think she was in love with her husband."

"That, I suppose, according to your way of thinking, would be exceedingly funny," said Mr. Gaye, savagely.

The guests were evidently enjoying their meal, for there was nothing but laughter heard on all sides. After lunch was over, the visitors strolled through the buildings and grounds, admiring its location and conveniences. The bands played off and on all day, and towards sunset the crowds began to thin out. The Pembertons decided to return home, leaving the Major and Miss Arnold in charge. Fred and Mabel returned to the Pemberton home for a few days' visit.

"You ought to be a happy man, Mr. Pemberton," said Fred. "There was nothing but good wishes spoken on all sides for you and your family."

"I am happy, Fred; the few years that are left to me I will endeavor to make the best possible use of. My only regret is for the past. When I think of the years I have wasted—years in which the world was no better for my being here. I helped no one. I thought of no one—only self. Now that it is too late and I have not the time to carry it all out, I want to do so much. But I will outline it all, and if the great Creator sees fit to take me away before it is finished, Tom and Esther must carry it on for me."

"You will live many years yet, Mr. Pemberton," said

Fred. "I honestly believe that people who are trying to do some good in the world live longer than the average."

"I hope it may prove so, Fred, for I have a great deal to complete yet."

Mrs. Pemberton, Mabel and Esther had only one thought—the baby. They hovered around it all the time.

"What has become of your friend, Mrs. Gaye?" asked Mabel.

"I haven't seen her since the opening day."

"Mother cares for nothing any more but her grandson," laughed Esther.

"And why should I not?" replied Mrs. Pemberton. "He is a little darling, is he not, Mabel?"

"I should say so," answered Mabel. "I wish he was mine."

"Mrs. Gaye does not care for children," said Mrs. Pemberton. "She thinks I'm foolish to waste my time over this little treasure, but I know it is not."

"Esther," said Tom, coming into the nursery, where they all seemed to centre now, "here's a letter from Aunt Amelia. She says that uncle has entirely recovered from his indisposition, and that they will both be able to come some time next week."

"Won't that be lovely," said Esther. "We will all be here together for the christening."

"You know, Mabel," she said, "we were waiting for uncle to be able to come. Aunt Amelia would not come without him, so we kept putting it off."

Mrs. Pemberton was delighted to hear the news. "Now," she said, "there need be no further delay." At her request, it was to be a social event.

"We want every one to see our grandson's christening, Esther, we are so proud of him." She asked Mrs. Gaye to help her to issue the invitations as soon as the day was decided on. "No, indeed," answered that lady, "no christening in mine, if you please."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CHRISTENING.

Mabel and Fred decided to remain, as it would hardly be worth while to return, only to come back in a few days. The preparations for the christening and lunch that was to follow went busily on. The robe and other dainty little fixings were in readiness. Everything now was awaiting the arrival of Tom's uncle and aunt. The morning they were expected Tom went with the carriage to meet them. Aunt Amelia had not yet seen her grandnephew, and was extremely anxious to do so. Tom saw that his uncle was far from well; he was still quite weak, but the anxiety to see Tom's son spurred him on. Otherwise he would not have left home. Aunt Amelia plied Tom with all sorts of questions as to the baby's looks. Esther had gone into details when she wrote, but Aunt Amelia had apparently forgotten it all. Tom was obliged to tell it all to her again: the color of its eyes, its hair, how much it weighed at its birth, and how much it weighs now, whom it resembled, and so forth. The carriage stopped. Tom assisted them out, and helped them up the steps. Esther was there to meet them.

"Why, Esther, you look splendid," said Aunt Amelia, as she kissed her affectionately. "Look at her eyes, how they sparkle," she said as she turned to her husband.

"That's the mother-light, my dear," he answered, "that ought to shine in every happy mother's eyes."

"Where is the baby, Esther? Do take us to him," she said. "I can hardly contain myself, I am so eager to see him."

Esther took her up stairs, and tried to persuade her to remove her wraps, but all to no purpose. "I must first see the boy." Esther took her to the nursery. Aunt Amelia put on her glasses and looked intently at the baby.

"Just as I expected," she exclaimed, "it favors the Pem-

bertons. Boys usually favor the mother, girls the father," she said seriously. "What are you going to call him, Esther?"

"Stanley Pemberton Seymour."

"After your father?"

"Yes," replied Esther, "that was Tom's, my own and my mother's choice."

"Esther," said Aunt Amelia, "if you ever have a daughter, would you gratify an old lady's wish by calling her Amelia? I would like a child called after me. I never was blessed with any of my own. My sister could not grant the wish I expressed before Tom was born, to have her child named after me, for he was a boy. Now I will ask you that favor."

"Certainly, I will grant it; if ever we are blessed with a daughter, her name will be Amelia," said Esther, as she kissed her aunt tenderly.

It was not until Tom came into the room, bringing his uncle, that Esther could persuade Aunt Amelia to remove her things. She had recalled Tom's childhood and kept telling Esther of it over and over again.

"Come, Aunt," said Tom, "you better lie down and rest. We will call you in time for lunch."

After Tom's uncle had given the baby a precursory glance he, too, decided it took after the Pemberton side of the house. Esther accompanied Aunt Amelia to her room, the latter finally yielding to Esther's entreaties to lie down. She closed the door gently and returned to the nursery. Tom, in the meantime, had persuaded his uncle to rest.

"Esther," said Tom, "I really think Aunt Amelia is disappointed because our boy does not look like her."

"Bless her dear heart! She asked me if we ever had a daughter to call it Amelia."

"What did you say?"

"What could I say? I promised her I would, of course. I would not hurt her feelings for all the world by refusing her request."

"I would not want you to, dear. Aunt Amelia has been

mother, friend and adviser to me, and I prize her love and affection next to yours, Esther. You have always been kind to her. Many girls would laugh at her old fashioned ways and would not want her to visit their home, but you, Esther, have always welcomed her warmly and insisted on her having first place in our home."

"And in our hearts," put in Esther. "I could hardly do otherwise, Tom. She is a beautiful example of the old school. Her old fashioned ways have a charm for me. Her language is choice and shows culture. She is of a school that is fast passing away—a lady. A lady under all circumstances, her self-possession is remarkable in these days of nervous haste. She is always calm and collected," said Esther.

"Yes," said Tom, "she has always been that way to the best of my recollection."

Here their conversation was interrupted by Mrs. Pemberton, who called to Esther to come quick. "The baby has his fingers tangled up in his jacket," she said excitedly.

Esther took the threads from between his tiny fingers.

"There was nothing to be alarmed about, mother. He often does that."

"It made me so nervous, Esther. I thought he was going to break his little fingers. Your father never would forgive me if anything happened to him while he was in my care."

"Poor mother," laughed Tom, "I believe you are as bad as the rest of us about the baby."

Aunt Amelia and her husband were stirring about in their rooms; they had rested and were preparing for lunch. Esther gently tapped at Aunt Amelia's door.

"May I come in?" she asked.

"Certainly, my dear. I was going to call you and Tom in a few minutes. I was unfolding Tom's christening robe. I brought it with me for his boy. It's yellow with age, Esther, but if you don't think it looks well, I'll take it back with me," she said, as the tears glistened in her eyes. "I have treasured it for years for such an occasion as this. I would like Tom's son to wear it at his baptism."

Esther consented with many misgivings. The baby's christening was to be a social affair. She had a beautiful robe prepared, but if Aunt Amelia insisted on it, she must array her baby in this old fashioned, plain robe, yellowed with age. Here Tom came to the rescue.

"Aunt Amelia," he said, "would it hurt to wash this thing?"

"Oh, Tom!" cried Aunt Amelia, in dismay, "don't call your christening robe 'this thing.' Remember, when you wore it your godparents made promises for you."

"Why, Aunt Amelia, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I only thought that a little soap and water would improve it."

"No, Tom, I would like your child to wear it just as it is."

"He will, Aunt Amelia," said Esther, determined not to hurt her feelings.

The following Sunday was chosen for the christening. The church was crowded with worshippers and guests. Aunt Amelia held herself very erect as she entered the pew. This day called back to her mind a similar event that had taken place years before in honor of Tom's baptism. "How quickly the years pass away," she thought.

When the ceremony began Aunt Amelia held the baby with trembling hands and gave the responses in a clear voice. This ceremony meant more than mere words to her. It was the culmination of her dreams: to hold Tom's child in her arms. In her mind's eye she had often pictured his wife and children being around her in her old age, to comfort and be her solace. Tom's choice of a wife went far beyond her expectations. To her Esther was perfection. The latter's love for Tom was the source of continued happiness to Aunt Amelia. "Her boy," as she affectionately called Tom, had made no mistake in choosing his wife. She loved Esther for her many fine qualities, and her love grew stronger each time she saw her.

After the ceremony was over, they drove to the house, followed by the invited guests. Aunt Amelia was very happy. She had always been treated with the greatest

respect by the Pembertons' friends, who admired her stately bearing, and who honored her as Tom's aunt.

As they went to lunch Mr. Pemberton conducted her to the seat of honor at the table. Her husband followed with Mrs. Pemberton. The meal was a joyous one, every one congratulating both parents and relatives. The day was one of rejoicing on all sides. After the guests had left, the family spent the rest of the time visiting, as Mabel and Fred intended to leave for home in the morning.

Aunt Amelia and her husband had yielded to Esther's persuasive powers and consented to remain another week.

"You must come with us and see father's new Home."

"I would like to very much," replied Aunt Amelia. "I read the account of the opening day in the paper you sent us. I am very much interested in such work. This idea of your father's is new to me, and I would like to see how it works. I don't quite understand it."

"Inmates are being received every day," said Esther. "Major Temple thinks it is one of the most worthy charities that ever came under his notice. He says it's astonishing how the mothers appreciate it. Many have offered to give their services for the privilege of entering the Home, but that is not father's idea. It's a rest Home; people that are able to work hardly need its privileges."

"How can you discriminate between them?" asked Aunt Amelia.

"The physician and Major Temple attend to that part of it."

"We will all go out some day and visit the Home," said Mrs. Pemberton, who was intensely interested in it now. She had accompanied her husband so often that she was becoming quite familiar with its workings.

"The inmates seem to be quite content. I spoke to some of them," she said, "and they had nothing but praise for their kind treatment."

Mr. Pemberton listened in wonder to his wife's conversation. She had gone with him one morning since the opening, but he had no idea that she took the slightest interest whatever in it.

"Why, Eva, I did not know you left the Major's house the day we went out."

"Yes, Stanley, I did. I went into the building alone and spoke to several of the women and walked around the grounds with two of them."

"Mother will be getting quite popular with the Home people if she does that very often," said Tom.

"They enjoyed it and so did I. I wanted the Major to go with me, but he said he did not believe in being too familiar with them. The Major considers such things lowering his dignity; he is a great disciplinarian," said Mr. Pemberton.

"I am glad I took Esther's advice and put Miss Arnold in charge of the women. The Major as general overseer is all right, but to manage the women's department he is too severe. He wants to rule everybody and everything by army rules."

CHAPTER XLVII.

AUNT AMELIA VISITS THE HOME.

After Mabel and Fred left for home the day's outing was planned. Esther arranged with the Major to have lunch served at his house for the party. Aunt Amelia was eager to see the institution.

The day they chose for going out was all that could be desired. The Major had everything in perfect order, even to himself. He had dressed with extra care in honor of the visitors.

He welcomed them cordially to his Home; he always spoke of it as *his*. Many strangers that visited it mistook him for Mr. Pemberton frequently. The family was amused at his assumption of ownership, but, as Mr. Pemberton said, "it hurts no one, so let him enjoy his pretended possession."

Aunt Amelia was delighted with the Major. "He is such a courtly gentleman," she said, as he left them to find Miss Arnold and bring her to lunch. Aunt Amelia wished to meet her. She knew she had cared for Mr. Pemberton

during his severe illness, and had also been his chief helper in furnishing the Home. She had heard so much about Miss Arnold; it increased her desire to see her.

The Major came across the lawn, escorting Miss Arnold.

"What a splendid looking man he is, and what a noble brow he has," said Aunt Amelia, as she raised her glasses. "And so that's Miss Arnold, is it? Why she is as dainty as can be. I pictured her as being a tall, angular woman of an energetic temperament and very swift movements."

"She's energetic enough," said Tom. "I suppose you expected her to have a bunch of keys rattling at her side, too, Aunt Amelia."

"Yes, Tom, they generally do have those appurtenances, those lady managers of institutions. One misses their jingle if they do not."

Miss Arnold was introduced to Aunt Amelia, who was delighted with her.

"Why, Esther, dear," she said, "she is a thoroughly cultured lady—one whom it is a pleasure to meet. It seems your father has been very fortunate in securing her services."

"We think so," answered Esther.

"Come," said Mr. Pemberton, "the lunch is all ready for us." The Major escorted Aunt Amelia to the table, the rest of the family following at their pleasure. He was very assiduous in his attentions to her. This pleased Esther, who knew she liked to receive homage from every one, especially the gentlemen. She was always regretting the lack of respect of the younger generation for older people.

"Why, in my young days," she frequently said, "no one thought of seating themselves until their elders were first seated. They are not to blame, of course, for the lack of training their parents gave them, but it does seem a pity to neglect the little attributes that go to make a perfect gentleman, and to let the children grow up careless and disrespectful to their elders." Her reminiscences were abruptly disturbed by the Major, who was handing her an entrée. "This," he said, "is perfectly delicious; it was made by Miss Arnold's own hands. She is a culinary artist, if I

may use the expression," said the Major, gallantly bowing to Miss Arnold.

"Why, Miss Arnold, it certainly is very palatable," said Aunt Amelia. "I must get you to tell me the ingredients you used in its preparation."

"I will, with pleasure," she answered.

"How would it do to let the rest of us have a taste of it?" said Tom.

"Pardon me, Mr. Seymour, I forgot to pass it on; pon my honor, I did."

After lunch they walked to the building, the Major and Miss Arnold going with them to explain the ins and outs of its workings.

Mrs. Pemberton was recognized by the inmates, who came timidly forward to greet her. She remained with them conversing, while the rest of the party went over the building.

"What has become of your mother, Esther?" asked Mr. Pemberton.

"She has met some old cronies," laughed Tom.

"Isn't it strange, father, how she stops and talks to them. One time you could not have got her near them. She was such a stickler for those kind of people to keep their place. Now she actually sits by them and asks them how many children they have, and if they ever had the whooping cough, or measles," put in Tom."

They all laughed at his sally. Mrs. Pemberton really enjoyed talking with them. As they were resting on one of the seats in the grounds, she joined them again.

"Think of it, Stanley, that woman I was talking to has had twelve children, and only one pair of twins in the lot."

"We knew you were asking her how many children she had."

"No, I wasn't, Tom, she told me herself. There's seven boys and five girls."

"That's a very comfortable sized family," said Aunt Amelia, seriously. "God's blessings have surely poured down on her."

Mr. Pemberton smiled at her fervor. "Yes," he said,

"it would have been all right if the finances doubled as rapidly as the family, but the poor woman broke down under the burden of so many mouths to feed on practically nothing but her own labor. Now it is my duty——"

"Your privilege, father," suggested Esther, "to care for her."

"It's the same thing, my dear: duty or privilege. I intend to carry it out to the letter."

Aunt Amelia complained of feeling chilly and was anxious to return home. Her husband had not been able to go with them. He preferred to save his strength for the trip home next day.

"Amelia will tell me all about it," he said. "She sees everything. Nothing escapes her vigilant eye. I am a very poor observer. She always has to draw my attention to things," he said as they left the house.

They all walked back to the Major's quarters, where the carriages were waiting. The Major assisted Aunt Amelia into the carriage. As they drove away, he remarked to Miss Arnold, "That is a charming old lady; pon my honor, she is."

"They all are, Major. I think Mrs. Seymour is exceedingly pretty."

"She is," replied the Major, "but she lacks the maturer mind that goes to make her husband's aunt such an enjoyable companion."

"That's true, of course, Major, but she has a remarkably bright mind for so young a girl. One can't help calling her a girl. She is so young to be designated by the mature title of matron."

"Don't you think we have had a delightful day?"

"Really, Miss Arnold, those dishes you prepared for the lunch were entrancing; they would tempt any one to make a gourmand of himself."

"I am afraid, Major, you are trying to flatter me."

"Won't you sit here with me, Miss Arnold. I have something I wish very much for you to hear."

"I would not mind, Major, but it's getting cool. Suppose we go indoors, and I will make a cup of tea. You

have entertained me to-day, now I will return the compliment."

They went to Miss Arnold's rooms, and she spread an inviting table, made the tea, and requested the Major to draw his chair up to the table.

"Really, Miss Arnold, you are a marvel; pon my honor, you are. Most ladies object to preparing a meal, but you do it so deftly that it looks more like a pleasure than a toil."

"I enjoy it, Major. Maybe that's why. This is part of a nurse's training. We are taught to prepare dainty dishes, such as would be likely to tempt the appetite of an invalid."

The Major enjoyed this "tete-a-tete" meal served so daintily. Miss Arnold had only once before invited him to eat with her; that was when he had a severe cold and was under the physician's care. It was more in the capacity of nurse. This time he was her guest. He watched her pour out the tea; her shapely hands guileless of rings caught his eye. He secretly admired them and wished to himself that it was his hand she was clasping instead of the teapot. The Major was fast growing sentimental, as old wooers are apt to. He could hardly wait until the meal was over to pour his precious secret into her ears. Miss Arnold invited him to partake of some more tea, but the Major assured her that he could not drink another drop. After a pause she began to gather up the dishes and laid them away. The Major watched her feverishly. He wanted to find an opening where he could tell her of the desire of his heart, but she moved about the room replacing the chairs and arranging things on the table until he was becoming desperate.

"Miss Arnold," he said hastily. She turned around.

"Yes, Major."

"Cannot you see the upheaval of emotion that is troubling me? If you could place that dear hand of yours over my heart, you could detect its increasing pulsative movements. Won't you help me? I cannot express my pent up feelings."

"Why, Major, what do you want to say?"

"To say, Miss Arnold? Why, I want to say that I love you; pon my honor, I do."

"That's too bad, Major. I am sorry it proved such an effort on your part."

"Oh, you dear, tender hearted girl, you doubtless have felt the same emotions, this all-consuming love which comes into every one's life. I adore you; worship you; I cannot live without you," said the Major, his face red with suppressed excitement.

"There is some misunderstanding somewhere, Major. You surely don't mean you love me."

"You, and none but you," replied the Major.

"I am real sorry you should love me, Major, for I care nothing for you in that way."

"You don't love me, Miss Arnold? Impossible! I come of a very aristocratic family, I would have you know. The Temples date back to William the Conqueror."

"That may be so, Major, but I don't see what that has to do with my loving you."

"It has this much, Miss Arnold: that such families as ours don't go begging."

"Then, Major, why should my refusal of your love distress you. You will in all probability find some one who is more awed than I am about your ancient lineage. I often have wondered what kind of a ship brought those noble ancestors to Britian's shores. It must have been an immense one, judging from the number of people who claim that their ancestors came over with the redoubtable conqueror."

"Miss Arnold, I am surprised at your levity on such a serious subject as love."

"It's not levity, Major, on my part. I have had other Britons ask me to marry them. I have numbers of your country men and women among my dearest friends, and they all claim, with very few exceptions, that their ancestors came over with the now famous William. It struck me as extremely funny when you made the same claim."

"Miss Arnold, I am very much disappointed in you. I looked on you as superior to most of your set, and was willing to lay my heart at your feet. I love you as I have seldom loved before."

"I am sorry, Major, that I have fallen in your estimation, but let me tell you a few reasons why I couldn't marry you. First, I do not love you. Next, you are too overbearing. Another reason (pardon me, Major, if I hurt your feelings), you are too old." The Major winced at this last assertion. It was a true but painful fact. "Forty years, at least, older than I am," she reiterated. The Major was very sensitive about his age and disliked having it alluded to. "And, last of all, I am promised to another."

"You are promised to another!" he said, aghast. "To whom, may I ask?"

"Though it hardly concerns you, I will tell you. I am engaged to a physician; his name would not interest you."

"Then, why don't you marry him and not deceive men with susceptible hearts like mine?" said the Major, angrily.

"Simply because neither is ready."

"He must first acquire a practice?"

"You have no right to talk to me this way, Major. It's anything but gentlemanly."

"I am very sorry, Miss Arnold, on my honor, I am. You have hurt my pride by your refusal of my affections."

"Now, Major, you probably have been asking women to marry you for years past, so one more refusal can't hurt you very much. You ought to have known that I would not marry you, Major. I never gave you the slightest encouragement. I did nothing that you could even construe into such."

The Major said nothing for some time; then he looked at Miss Arnold, saying, "I was too sure of you. I thought you would be glad to ally yourself with a Temple, but I was mistaken."

"You were, Major. I know nothing of your family or its ancestors, and care less. When one really loves, she rarely thinks of anything but the object of her love. It is generally when it is too late that they search the genealogical tree."

The Major was very downcast over his refusal. He could not understand any one refusing a Temple. He rose, took his hat, bade Miss Arnold good-night, and left for his

quarters. He walked slowly to them, thinking all the time of his failure to win her love. He had pictured her joyful acceptance of the honor of marrying a Temple and not her curt refusal. This mortified his pride to a greater extent than he would care to admit.

"Poor Major," thought Miss Arnold, as she listened to the echo of his steps on the gravel walk, "I firmly believe he thought he was doing me a great honor in asking me to be his wife. I will hate to meet him now in my daily rounds. But there was no need to worry over his feelings."

Next morning he was as pleasant as if nothing had ever happened to disturb his placid life. He asked her opinion, as he usually did, on the affairs of the Home, consulted her on all the various details of their joint work, just as he always had. The Major's affections had been refused so often that it was getting to be an old story with him. But still, each time it hurt his inordinate pride just the same. This time he really thought he was desperately in love, and though at the time Miss Arnold's refusal of his love shocked him severely, he soon recovered.

On rising next morning and reviewing the event of the evening before, he concluded it was just as well Miss Arnold refused his love.

"I believe, after all, that it was merely a passing fancy of mine, though she is remarkably intelligent for a woman, I must say, and really a very attractive person. I must not be so impulsive. I might be led into a *mésalliance* and bring disgrace on the name of Temple, pon my honor, I might. A man has to be so careful. There are so many designing women around, ready to inveigle him into matrimony, and really I am so susceptible to their charms." The Major was beginning to think now that he had been led into a trap.

"I cannot believe that Miss Arnold would deliberately crush my affections. She appears to be so thoughtful for my comfort all the time, but there is no telling. She may have planned it all, inviting me to drink tea with her and treating me so kindly. That was, I am sure, what led me to act so rashly. However, I got safely out of it, and have

much to be thankful for." He seemed to lose sight of the fact that Miss Arnold had told him she was already engaged to be married. In a day or two the restraint Miss Arnold felt while in the Major's company disappeared, and things moved on in the old pleasant way, just as if love had never been mentioned between them.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MAJOR RESIGNS HIS POSITION.

Aunt Amelia returned from the Home tired out, but full of enthusiasm for it and the Major. She entertained her husband with all she saw, not forgetting to include the Major and Miss Arnold.

"They were really delightful to me and made my visit so pleasant and instructive."

"Amelia," said her husband, "we must be getting home. If you are ready I would like to leave on the morning train." This was settled on and Aunt Amelia retired early. She could not sit up any longer, she told them. "I cannot keep my eyes open." Esther went up stairs with her and prepared everything for her comfort. When she returned where the rest of the family was she asked Tom if it would not be better for him to return home with his uncle.

"He is so feeble, it's hardly safe for him to travel and Aunt Amelia is not strong enough to help him on and off the cars."

"I was thinking of that, too, Esther. Something might happen to him and we would never forgive ourselves."

In the morning when they told Aunt Amelia of their plan, she was very pleased. "I am glad Tom can come with us; it's such a responsibility on me to care for my husband in his present weak condition."

Aunt Amelia and her husband bid them a tearful good-bye. The latter said, "Esther, I have a presentiment that I will never see you or your boy again. Teach him to respect my memory, dear."

"I will, uncle," said Esther, "but hope you will be with us for many years yet."

While Tom was gone the Major called on Mr. Pemberton and handed in his resignation.

"What is this for, Major?" he asked in surprise.

"I don't wonder you ask me that question, Mr. Pemberton, but something extraordinary has happened. I received a letter to-day from my solicitors informing me that I had fallen heir to the vast Temple estate of Templeton Grange. It's the most remarkable instance in my memory. There were two prospective heirs between me—mere infants. According to the regular laws of nature, they should have lived years after I had passed away, but by the inscrutable disposition of Providence, they were both removed from this earthly abode by malignant scarlet fever inside of eight days, so the letter informs me. My falling heir to this estate will necessitate my returning to dear old England to confer with my solicitors. But, Mr. Pemberton, on account of your extreme kindness to me when aw—when—well, when I was rather down in the heel, I will remain at the Home until my successor is appointed. If I can help you in any way, I am at your service, Mr. Pemberton, pon my honor, I am."

"Major, this is such a complete surprise, I hardly know what I will do. I think I will talk it over with Miss Arnold. She has had considerable experience in such matters, in spite of her youth."

"Do, Mr. Pemberton. If you wish, I will tell her on my return to the Home."

"When do you wish to go, Major?"

"I really don't know yet. You see, it will be necessary for me to confer with my tailor first before I can decide anything very definite. My wardrobe needs replenishing sadly."

"We can arrange everything to your satisfaction in a few days, I think."

Mrs. Pemberton was sorry to hear that the Major was going to leave them, but Esther thought it was just as well.

"He is too severe, and really I think he is a superfluity."

The Home can run just as well without him, but father always looked on it as a charity to give him an occupation of some sort. He says it's preferable in his eyes to seeing him living at some one else's expense. The Major knew he was doing comparatively nothing for his pay, but considered that by giving his name as head of the institution he was bestowing a great honor upon it."

Mr. Pemberton drove out to see Miss Arnold and to consult with her. She suggested many changes as soon as the Major should leave.

"I don't think it would be advisable to make any alterations while he is here; he is very proud of his innovations."

"No, we will leave everything as it is until he has gone," replied Mr. Pemberton. "Miss Arnold, I have thought if we had a regular resident physician instead of a visiting one, he could manage the whole business."

Miss Arnold's heart palpitated at the thought of her future husband. "If he could only get the position! She timidly mentioned the fact to Mr. Pemberton.

"Why, bless me, Miss Arnold! Why did you not tell me long ago about this? Your future husband is just the man we want. You could both manage the whole building. Give me his address. I will go and see him at once."

"He is in one of the city hospitals. I can have him call on you, if you wish."

"That would be more satisfactory, Miss Arnold."

Mr. Pemberton, on talking it over with Esther, said, "It was all managed easier than I looked for. I really expected to find the Major's place hard to fill. How quiet Miss Arnold kept about her engagement! I thought the Major was laying siege to her heart. I heard to-day he *did* ask her to marry him, but she refused him. There is one thing, Esther, if Miss Arnold and this physician get married, they will be more likely to remain. I will make it worth their while. It upsets an institution to have frequent changes in the management."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CLOSING EVENTS.

The Major busied himself with his preparations. There were farewells to be spoken, and dozens of little offices to be attended to. He planned to stop in New York a day or two and call on Charles Lloyd and also visit the Fairchilds. "The first thing Mr. Lloyd will ask me will be, 'How is my daughter and her husband, and did you see my brother before you left?' I would be very remiss in my duty to my old friend if I did not call on them, pon my honor, I would.

Miss Arnold was going to be married before the Major left. He had met the doctor, and, as he told Mr. Pemberton, "he was very favorably impressed with his ability to take the Major's place."

It was arranged that the Major visit with the Pembertons, while Esther and her mother attended to the renovating of the Major's quarters and prepare them as a residence for the doctor and his wife. Esther thought a great deal of Miss Arnold, and wished to supervise the changes in the house herself.

"We must have the china closet enlarged and refilled with finer china and glassware, mother. There's nothing the average woman loves so much as pretty dishes."

"*You* certainly do, Esther, and so does Mabel. She has a mania for gathering odd pieces."

"I don't know what Miss Arnold's hobby is, mother, but I am going to find out, if I can."

"When will the Major be here, Esther?"

Some time to-morrow; he is in the hands of his tailor, he told father, and it will depend on that luminary how soon he is released from the arduous task of choosing becoming effects in garments suitable to his style. His conceit is colossal, isn't it, mother? It's a wonder to me that he condescends to purchase his clothing in this country, but

father says he explained it by saying that this tailor came from London to cater to his fellow countrymen."

The Major's preparations for his return to the land of his birth seemed to be a serious operation, judging by the days he spent attending to his personal adornment. Tom returned from his trip home with his uncle and aunt.

"We had a very comfortable journey," he said. "I persuaded uncle to remain in the sleeper until we arrived there; consequently, he suffered little or no inconvenience or fatigue. It was hard work for me to get away from them. They gave me no end of advice, how to bring up my son. They seemed to have every confidence in you, Esther, for the advice was all directed to me."

"Dear old souls," said Esther, "how they do love us, Tom! We ought to be proud of such affection, for they mean every word they say."

Esther told Tom the news. "So the Major is going away, and Miss Arnold is going to get married to some physician, and they will take charge of the Home?"

"That's good," answered Tom, as she inquired what he thought of the new arrangement. "It would make a good occasion for one of your mother's famous dinners. I must suggest it to her."

"It would be splendid, Tom; it would do for a farewell to the Major, and an act of courtesy to the bride-to-be. Let us go and find mother and see what she thinks of the idea." They found her and Mr. Pemberton in the nursery, admiring the baby.

"You ought to see him smile, Tom," said Mrs. Pemberton. "He's just as cute as he can be. You little darling, you," she said as she clasped him in her arms.

"He's a smart little rascal, Tom; it's no use talking," said Mr. Pemberton, standing with his hands in his pockets, gazing at him. "He knows my voice the minute he hears it, and turns his little head around to see where I am, bless him. Why, he is the greatest comfort to me and my wife. We could not keep house without him."

"Mother, Tom and I have a suggestion to make to you. We want you to give one of your dinners in honor of Miss

Arnold when she is married. It would also do as a farewell to the Major."

"I would like to, Esther, but whom should I ask? Mrs. Gaye is so jealous now because I think more of the baby than I do of her. She bought a new hat yesterday, and, would you believe it, Esther, she would not tell me the color of the roses on it. She was that angry because I would not leave the baby to go with her. She said if I cared more for that beefy little baby than I did for her, I could find out the best way I could. Just think of the audacity of her calling our little darling a beefy little thing! You know, Esther, she has not seen it since it was three days old, and she made some horrible remarks about its red face at the time. I did not like to tell you, Esther. I thought you would feel bad."

"No, mother; I don't pay any attention to her. As near as I know, most babies have ruddy complexions when they are that young. But to come back to our dinner, mother, Mrs. Gaye is not a necessity."

"I'll ask her, Esther, just to let her see the baby, and see if it won't surprise her how sweet he is."

"It does not matter which way it is. The Major likes Mr. Gaye. So we may as well ask them both."

Miss Arnold's wedding was to take place the beginning of the following week. Esther was anxious to have the house completely renovated and ready for occupancy. So, while her mother was arranging the details of her coming dinner party, Esther and Tom were busy seeing to the house.

"I do wish, Tom," she said, "I knew what Miss Arnold's special weakness was in fads. I want to surprise her by fixing everything up to suit her taste."

"I can tell you," laughed Tom. "Brass, just common brass. She has the biggest collection of candlesticks, vases, bowls, trays, and I could not tell you what else of that metal, and she is always on the lookout for more."

"Then I will add some to her collection. Let us see if we can find something in that metal that she does not possess."

They went to the various stores, endeavoring to find what they wanted. At last, by a mere chance, they stumbled onto some brass kettles and teapots. Esther invested in several of them, and with Tom's help carried them in triumph to the house. She placed them conspicuously on one of the tables, where Miss Arnold could hardly help seeing them. This was the finishing touch. Everything was now in readiness for them. Tom, at Esther's suggestion, locked the house and took the key over to the building, handing it to Miss Arnold, saying, "Everything, I hope, will be to your satisfaction, Miss Arnold. My wife has taken special pains to make it so."

"Thank you and her too, Mr. Seymour, for your kindness to me. I appreciate all you have done for my comfort."

Mrs. Pemberton had wished Miss Arnold to be married from her home, but she said the doctor and she preferred a quiet wedding, but would gladly accept their invitation to the dinner next evening.

In the meantime Mr. and Mrs. Gaye were squabbling over their invitation. "I don't want to go to her dinner party," she said, alluding to Mrs. Pemberton's invitation. "She has treated me shamefully since that grandchild came. I am going to call her Grandmother Pemberton every time I meet her for the future."

"She cares nothing for your insults, madam," replied her husband. "There is more womanliness in Mrs. Pemberton than I ever dreamed of. She idolizes that child. That shows she is a good woman in spite of her frivolous ways. You, madam," he said fiercely, "have never shown the slightest attribute that goes to make up such characters. You will go to the dinner, do you hear me! But beware, madam, how you treat your hostess. If you show the slightest disrespect to her or her grandchild or any member of the family, mark my word, you'll suffer for it."

Mrs. Gaye was too terrified to answer. She went about preparing for the dinner. "I have a great notion to wear the shabbiest dress I've got," she said, forgetting that she would be hurting her own appearance worse than Mrs. Pemberton's feelings.

Miss Arnold was quietly married in accordance with her own and the doctor's wish, and next evening they attended the dinner given in their and the Major's honor. The latter was resplendent in his new garments. Prosperity was apparently agreeing splendidly with the Major, who was extremely jovial during the dinner and listened to Mrs. Gaye's silly remarks with more patience than was usual with him.

The bride blushed becomingly as they toasted her and her husband's health. The Major was called on jokingly for a speech. He rose, cleared his throat, saying, "Pardon me, but you have taken me so by surprise."

"That you have lost your speech!" said Tom, laughing.

"Great joke, that, Mr. Seymour, pon my honor, it is."

He continued, nevertheless, and complimented the doctor on his choice of a wife. "She is a very capable woman and has the sweetest disposition I ever came across in any one. Her attractions are manifold, and her ways alluring. Pon my honor, they are, doctor. I fell a victim to them myself, but, fortunately for you, sir, she refused to ally her affections with mine. I congratulate you, sir, on drawing a prize in that mysterious problem called matrimony; pon my honor, I do." He sat down feeling he had done the bride a special honor.

"It's not often that a Temple deigns to speak in public," he said afterwards to Tom, "but I would not fail in my duty towards the bride, so granted your request, Mr. Seymour."

After dinner they returned to the drawing room, where Mr. Pemberton brought forth a handsome silver service which he requested the Major to present to the bride and groom. The request was made more for the fun of it than anything else, but the Major took it in all seriousness. He walked with a military tread across the room to where the bride and groom were sitting talking to Esther and Tom, and said in a deep bass voice: "Doctor and Mrs. Morgan, I have been requested by our host of this evening to present this silver service to you. May you keep your lives as bright and untarnished as this metal. I will long remember

this felicitous occasion where I was privileged twice in one evening to address you briefly. This is a very important step in your lives. Keep in the straight path, I beseech you. Never waver in your duty towards one another. It is a sublime and lofty sentiment that moves me to communicate to you the seriousness of this event. The bright present, together, let us hope, with the brighter future, lies before you. It is all yours. Make the most of it, I entreat you. It behooves you to be up and doing. Life is at most only a span. It is no wonder the poet called life a fleeting show. Just as you realize its worth, you are hurried on and swept out of it. So, as I said before, make the most of it. Life is what you make it; bright as this silver service, or sad as a last farewell. I hope you will live long to enjoy it and each other's society. But, bear in mind, life is brief."

There is no knowing how much longer the Major would have continued his harangue had he not been interrupted by Tom's loud ha! ha! Tom could restrain himself no longer. Every one joined him heartily with their pent up mirth, and soon nothing could be heard but the sound of bubbling laughter. The Major hardly knew what to make of it. At last it seemed to dawn on him, and he, too, laughed loud and long.

The evening soon passed away. The doctor and his wife returned to the Home. The Major remained until next day, when he was to take the train to New York to visit the Lloyds. In the morning he busied himself gathering up his numerous trunks, grips, and assorted luggage.

"Really, Mrs. Pemberton," he said, "I feel quite sad to think I am leaving your hospitable home, perhaps forever," he sighed. "We may never meet again. And you, Mr. Pemberton, have been friend, benefactor and adviser to me during my sojourn in this fair land of yours. Good-bye, good-bye," he repeated. "May heaven send down on you her choicest blessings. And to you, Mrs. Seymour, together with your noble husband, I wish every joy in your son. Sometimes your thoughts may wander over the vast expanse of ocean to me in my far off home. There they will

always strike a responsive chord. If ever any of you should come to England's shores, believe me, you will find a hearty welcome and a hearty handshake from Major Temple of Templeton Grange. Farewell!" the Major said, as he went out the door. Mrs. Pemberton wiped her eyes.

"Poor Major! How much we will miss him! He loved a good dinner and always appreciated my efforts in that direction!"

Now that they were alone again, Tom took up Mr. Pemberton's business with renewed vigor. Esther interested herself in her little son. Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton planned together future charitable work.

"Stanley, it seems to me, we have been so much happier this last year, you and I."

"Yes, Eva; we have been trying to make others happy, that's why. It has reflected back on our own lives. In the old days my only thought was money; your only thought was society. Now all is changed. We have both found a newer, fuller and better life; a life that lives for others, and for the good that we can accomplish for our fellow beings. True happiness consists in helping and aiding those who are less fortunate than we are. We have much to be thankful for, Eva. Our lives have always run along smooth lines. Esther has been our comfort and our joy. Tom's coming into our lives has brought to us an exceptionally good son. And now our grandson has come to brighten our declining years. For him we will live our lives over, and be better for his presence. Let us resolve, Eva, to carry on this good work, you and I together. Your interesting yourself in it has added so much to my happiness. I owe a debt of gratitude that it will take my lifetime to pay. Let us, as we go down the sunny slope of life into the darkening shadows that warn us of the great valley through which we all must pass sooner or later, reach out a helping hand to those who are stumbling along by the wayside. Let us not close our ears to sorrow and distress, but make some good use of this money that I sacrificed my youth and every good impulse that possessed me to accumulate. It was not the source of pleasure I expected it to be."

"But, Stanley, we will want some pleasure ourselves out of this money?"

"Of course we will, Eva. We will continue to enjoy our home and friends, as we have always done, for there are many bright days yet before us, I hope, and many kind hearts that yet beat for us in this world of ours."

The End.

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